Rashi on Proverbs
רש"י על משלי
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Rashi on Proverbs

Chapter 1

Verse 1

The proverbs of All his words are illustrations and allegories. He compared the Torah to a good woman, and he compared idolatry to a harlot.

Verse 2

To know wisdom and discipline He stated these proverbs to make known to the people [wisdom and discipline], that they toil in the Torah, which is wisdom, discipline and understanding.

Verse 3

righteousness, justice, and equity “Righteousness” denotes charity from his money; “justice” means to judge honestly, and “equity” denotes compromise—the smooth and straight road, equal to this one and to that one.

Verse 4

To give prudence to the simple Koheleth stated these proverbs so that the simple should gain prudence. knowledge...to the youth And also to the youth, who is devoid of all [knowledge], who has not yet learned anything.
and discretion Thoughts of counsel.

Verse 5

Let the wise man hear these proverbs.
and increase to his wisdom.
learning Heb. לֶקַח, learning.
the wise man This is the one who has heard wisdom.
The understanding man who has knowledge superior to the knowledge of the wise man, for he knows how to derive one idea from another, and he adds to what he [has] heard.

Verse 6

to understand an allegory and a figure That they should direct their attention to understand the verses through two methods: the allegory and the figure. They should understand what he compares to the figure, but they should not neglect the figure itself, for that, too, requires understanding. When he states, “To save you from a strange woman and a

foreign one” (2:16), idolatry is meant; this is the allegory, and also the figure—for he expressed his allegory in terms of a woman—should be understood by it, [meaning that] you shall beware of a strange woman (other editions: a harlot).
the words of the wise and their riddles Those who interpret the Torah metaphorically, full verses and elliptical ones, allusions, comparisons and riddles.

Verse 7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge Until here, he explained for what purpose Solomon composed this book, and now the book commences.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge This is the separation of the fundamentals of knowledge, and what shall be for you first, preceding knowledge: Before your wisdom, first fear your Creator, and that will give your heart the desire to engage in wisdom and in knowledge, for the fools, who do not fear the Lord, despise wisdom and discipline.

Verse 8

Hearken, my son, to the discipline of your father What the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Moses in writing and orally.
your mother Heb. אמך [like אמתך], your nation, the nation of Israel, as in (Ezek. 19:2): “What a lioness was your mother [meaning your nation]!” These are the words of the Scribes, which they innovated and added and made safeguards for the Torah.

Verse 9

a wreath of grace They are a wreath of grace for your head; i.e., the instruction and the discipline will be a wreath of grace for your head, and they shall be like the rings of a golden ornament.
for your neck Heb. לגרגרתיך. Since the trachea is composed of many rings, he refers to the neck in the plural form.

Verse 10

sinners Heb. חטאים, sinners.
do not consent Heb. אל תבא, do not consent to them.

Verse 11

let us lie in wait for blood to shed blood.
let us hide Heb. נצפנה, an expression of ambush.
let us hide for the innocent, without cause Scripture states that their hiding for the innocent is without cause.

Verse 12

let us swallow them up The innocent when they are alive.
like the grave which swallows up the entire body.
and the whole ones Heb. ותמימים. This is not an expression of righteous men, but an expression of whole ones. Let us swallow them up when they are whole, like a man who descends into a pit when he is whole; i.e., when they are still wealthy, let us slay them and inherit their property.

Verse 13

Verse 14

Cast your lot among us If you wish, you may share; if you wish, it will be common property.
we will all have one purse together.

Verse 15

Verse 16

run to evil They run to their own harm, and they do not know to pay heed to the matter.

Verse 17

For the net is scattered without cause For the fowl that see wheat and legumes spread out upon the net—it appears to them that it is without cause; they do not realize for what reason they are spread, and they go down into it and eat.

Verse 18

but they lie in wait for their blood But the hunters lie in wait for the blood of the birds.

Verse 19

So are the ways of everyone who commits robbery Heb. בצע בצע, who commits robbery. It is beautiful and precious to him, and it is free to him. But his end will be that... it will take away the life of its owner His own life, for he has now become the owner of the money that he stole from his neighbor.

Verse 20

Wisdoms shout in the street Behold, the wisdoms of the Torah cry out in her streets to admonish [the people] to turn to them [the streets]. Now what are her streets? The study halls.
in the squares Heb. ברחבות, in the place where it is broadened [in the place where Torah is studied intensively and elaborated upon]. In this manner, Rabbi Tanhuma expounded [upon this verse].

Verse 21

She calls at the head of the noisy streets In the place where she is heard and called [and proclaimed Vilna, Warsaw ed.] there she calls out and makes the following statement. "How long will you naive ones, etc?"
at the entrances of the gates They are the place where the elders sit.

Verse 22

you naive ones Heb. פתים. Those who are enticed by enticers and sectarians.
naivete Heb. פתי, enticement, the noun for simplicity; like כלי, a vessel, קרי, a happening, שפי, silence.

Verse 23

Verse 24

I stretched out my hand to beckon to you to turn to me, like a man who beckons to his friend with his hand, stretching out his hand to him to turn to him.

Verse 25

and you have made nothing Heb. ותפרעו, and you nullified.
all my advice that I advised, in order to aggrandize you in the world.

Verse 26

Verse 27

when your fear comes like a storm Like a cloud that comes up suddenly.
like a whirlwind Tourbillon in Old French, in German wirbelwind (Cf. Rashi, Jer. 4:13, Ps. 83:16).
comes Heb. יאתה, it comes.

Verse 28

they shall seek me Heb. ישחרנני, they shall look for me.

Verse 29

Verse 30

Verse 31

of the fruit of their way The fruit of the troubles that befall them they eat in their lifetime, and the principal is preserved for them in Gehinnom.

Verse 32

for the backsliding of the naive Heb. משובת פתים. Insofar as their heart backslides.
and the tranquility of the fools shall cause them to perish Since they see the wicked who prosper, they adhere to their evil and do not repent.

Verse 33

shall dwell confidently in this world.
and shall be tranquil in the world to come.
from the fear of harm From the punishment of Gehinnom.
and shall be tranquil Heb. ושאנן and shall be tranquil and at rest. The word ושאנן is in the future tense; therefore, [the “nun”] is vowelized with a “pattah.”

Chapter 2

Verse 1

My son, if you accept my words You will be my son if you accept my words.

Verse 2

to make...attentive to wisdom to toil in [learning] Torah.

Verse 3

Verse 4

Verse 5

then you will understand the fear of the Lord This refers back to the topic above, in which he said, “For if you call for understanding.”

Verse 6

For the Lord gives wisdom Here you have learned that it [wisdom] is great, for it was given from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He. Therefore, you must acquire it.

Verse 7

He lays up sound wisdom for the upright The Holy One, blessed be He, hid it [wisdom] with Him for twenty-six generations until He gave it to the generation of the desert.
a shield for those who walk in integrity (He lays up a shield for those who walk with integrity); i.e., it will be a shield for you.

Verse 8

to keep the paths of justice For through it, they will keep the paths of justice, and He will guard the way of His pious so that they do not stumble.

Verse 9

Verse 10

Verse 11

thought Heb. תּוּשִׁיָּה. The Torah shall watch over you.

Verse 12

who speaks perversity Those are the people who distort the thing. [Rashi as it appears in Lublin and Waxman ed.] Malbim ed. reads: who distorts the words of the Torah after his erroneous view. Vilna and Warsaw editions read: They are the apostates who distort the words of the Torah to evil.

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

and perverse in their paths Heb. ונלוזים. Every expression of נלוז is an expression of crookedness, as it is always next to עקש, and עקש is an expression of crookedness, as it is stated (Isa. 42:16): "and crooked paths (ומעקשים) into straight ones."
and perverse in their paths They are crooked in their corrupt ways.

Verse 16

To save you from a strange woman From the assembly of idolatry [apostasy], which is sectarianism. It cannot be said that he spoke only of the actual adulteress, for what is the praise of the Torah, that he says here, "to save you from a strange woman," and not from any other sin. Rather, this is the casting off of the yoke of all the commandments.

Verse 17

Verse 18

for her house sinks to death This refers back to "to save you, etc." for whoever comes to her house will sink and slip as if down an incline that leads to death, and the Torah will guard you from this fall. Hence, it is a great thing for you.
the dead Heb. רפאים, those who neglect (נרפים) the way of goodness and are forsaken without support until they fall into Gehinnom.

Verse 19

none...return It is hard for them to part with it and to repent.

Verse 20

in order that you go This refers back to the above verse (verse 12): "To save you from an evil way," in order to lead you in the way of the good.

Verse 21

For the upright shall dwell in the land In the world to come.
shall remain therein when the wicked descend to Gehinnom.

Chapter 3

Verse 1

Verse 2

they shall add length of days...and peace The Torah and the commandments.

Verse 3

Verse 4

Verse 5

Trust in the Lord and squander your money to seek for yourself a teacher from whom to learn, and do not rely on your understanding.

Verse 6

Verse 7

Do not be wise in your own sight to despise the word of the one who reproves you.

Verse 8

It shall be healing for your navel Heb. לשרך. The wisdom shall be healing. שרך is like (Song 7:4): שררך, which means, your navel.
and marrow for your bones Heb. ושקוי, lit. moisture. That is the marrow, as the matter is stated (Job 21:24): "and the marrow of his bones is moistened."

Verse 9

from your substance From whatever He favored you [with], even from a pleasant voice. (Do not read: from your substance [מהונך] but: from your throat [מגרונך].)
and from the first (These are the terumoth and the tithes.)

Verse 10

Verse 11

My son, despise not the discipline of the Lord Should pains come upon you, they should be dear to you.
and do not abhor Heb. תקץ, from the expression of (Gen. 27:46) "I abhor (קצתי) my life."

Verse 12

as a father placates his son He desires to benefit his son and he placates him after striking him with the staff. So will the benefit be pleasant to you after the smiting.

Verse 13

Fortunate is the man who has found wisdom and a man who gives forth discernment One who learned wisdom until he is so accustomed to it that he can express it with his mouth.

Verse 14

for its commerce is better than the commerce of silver In any exchange, when a person exchanges [something] for merchandise, this one takes this, and that one takes that; but if one says to his friend, "Teach me your chapter, and I will teach you my chapter," [then] both chapters are found in the hand of each of them.
than fine gold Heb. מחרוץ. That is a type of gold.

Verse 15

and all your desirable things Heb. חפציך all that you desire.
cannot be compared to it They are not equal to its worth, nor their price to its price.

Verse 16

in its right hand Those who make the right use of it and engage in it for its own sake will have length of days and surely riches and honor, but those who make the wrong [lit. left] use of it, who engage in it not for its own sake, will still have riches and honor.

Verse 17

Verse 18

for those who grasp it Heb. למחזיקים for those who hold onto it, as in (Ex. 4:4): "and he extended his hand and grasped (ויחזק) it."
and those who draw near it are fortunate Heb. ותמכיה, those who draw near it. Likewise, every expression of תמיכה in this Book means that he holds onto it.

Verse 19

The Lord founded the earth with wisdom According to the Torah. This is the Torah, which is discernment and which is knowledge.

Verse 20

drip Heb. ירעפו, like יטיפו. Now, since the entire world was created with them, therefore...

Verse 21

let them not depart from your eyes Let them not be curved away from before your eyes, to remove them from before you.

Verse 22

and they shall be life for your soul for it is a tree of life.
and grace for your neck For this is its praise that is mentioned above (1:9): "and a necklace for your neck."

Verse 23

shall not stumble Heb. לא תגוף. This is an expression of stumbling, (achopper in French, straucheln in German. And so in Jeremiah 13:16 Psalms 91.12.) And so (Ps. 91:12). "Lest your foot stumble (תגף) on a stone"; and so (Jer. 13:16): "And before your feet stumble (יתנגפו)" and so (Ex. 21:22): "and they dash (ונגפו) a pregnant woman."

Verse 24

and when you lie down, your sleep shall be sweet Your sleep shall be sweet when you sleep, that you will not fear sudden terror.

Verse 25

or of the darkness when it comes upon the wicked.

Verse 26

For the Lord shall be your trust Heb. בכסלך, in your trust. Another explanation: in the things concerning which you are a fool (כסיל). This I found in Yerushalmi.

Verse 27

Do not withhold good from the one who needs it If you see that your friend wishes to benefit the poor, do not prevent him from doing so.
when you have power in your hand to stop him. Another explanation: Do not withhold good from the one who needs it Do not withhold charity from the poor man. when you have the power in your hand to do charity; perhaps a day will come when you will not have the power in your hand, and similarly...

Verse 28

Do not say to your fellow To the poor man.
though you have it with you what to give to him. But our Sages explained: "Go and return" regarding the wages of a hireling.

Verse 29

Devise no harm against your fellow Heb. אל תחרש, do not think—but it does not deviate from the meaning of plowing (חרישה) ; just as it is customary for the plower to prepare a place for the time of sowing, so does one who devises harm prepare a place for devices in his heart, how he will get up and execute it.

Verse 30

Do not quarrel with anyone to complain about him.
if he did you no harm i.e., unless he transgressed a commandment written in the Torah. The Torah states (Lev. 19:18): "And you shall love your fellow as yourself," but one who is wicked, you may hate.

Verse 31

Do not envy a man of violence to do as his deeds if you see him prospering.

Verse 32

for the perverse is an abomination to the Lord One who is crooked in his ways.
but His counsel is with the upright Heb. ואת, and with, etc.

Verse 33

Verse 34

If [one goes] to the scoffers If a person is attracted to them, he too will scoff with them.
but [if he goes] to the humble, he evokes grace If he joins the humble, eventually his deeds will evoke grace in people’s eyes.

Verse 35

The wise shall inherit honor, but the fools take disgrace as their portion For himself, he takes disgrace for his portion.

Chapter 4

Verse 1

Children, hearken to the discipline of the Father The Holy One, blessed be He.

Verse 2

For I gave you The prophet prophesies and speaks as an agent of the Holy One, blessed be He, and he is like His mouth.

Verse 3

For I was a son to my father Lest you say that Solomon hated people because he admonished them concerning robbery and immorality, something a person desires, he therefore states: I was a son, etc., a tender one and an only one, etc., that he loved me very much.

Verse 4

And he instructed me concerning that and he chastised me and said to me, “May your heart draw near to my words And since he chastened me with these words, therefore I admonish you concerning this (Rabbi Joseph Kara). Another explanation: For I was a son to my Father The prophet says, “I was a son to the Holy One, blessed be He, Who caused His spirit to rest upon me.” Now we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, called Solomon a son, for it is stated (II Sam. 7:14): “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son.”
a tender one and an only one before my mother Heb. לפני אמי, before my nation (אמתי) I am chosen and beloved like a tender and only son. Therefore, my father instructed me.

Verse 5

Verse 6

Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her Heb. אהבה, love her.

Verse 7

The beginning of wisdom [is to] acquire wisdom At the beginning of your wisdom, learn from others and acquire for yourself the tradition from the mouth of the teacher, and afterwards with all your possession acquire understanding. Concentrate on it by yourself to understand the reasons, thereby deriving one thing from another.

Verse 8

Search for her Heb. סלסלה search for her. Review it to examine it minutely, as in (Jer. 6:9): "as a vintager over the searchings (סלסלות)" who goes repeatedly through the vineyard and brings back his hand to search for the single grapes. In the expression of the Sages (Rosh Hashanah 26b), curls (מסלסל) his hair.

Verse 9

She will give your head a wreath of grace Heb. לוית חן, a wreath of grace, as in (1:9): "They are a wreath of grace (לויות חן) for your head."

Verse 10

Verse 11

Verse 12

When you walk, your step will not be straightened One who does not spread out his legs is likely to fall.

Verse 13

Take fast hold of discipline, do not let it loose Grasp the Torah, as in (Gen. 21:18) "and grasp (והחזיקי) your hand onto him"; (Ex. 4:4) "and he stretched out his hand and grasped it (ויחזק)."

Verse 14

You shall not come in the way of the wicked, and do not walk [as translated,] do not walk, as in (Job 23:11), "My foot has held to His path," and as in (Proverbs 14:15), "but a cunning man understands his steps."

Verse 15

Avoid it Heb. פרע, put it to naught.

turn away from it Heb. שטה, turn away.

Verse 16

For they will not sleep They are unable to sleep.

Verse 17

Verse 18

But the way of the righteous is like the light of dawn which shines and illuminates from the first ray of dawn.
until the day is perfect Until midday, which is the brightest time of day.

Verse 19

The way of the wicked is like pitch darkness; they do not know on what they stumble Suddenly, an obstacle will come to them, and they will not know how to beware of it.

Verse 20

Verse 21

Verse 22

for those who find them Heb. למצאיהם, an expression of finding.

Verse 23

From every interdict From whatever the Torah commanded to beware of, guard your heart (from transgressing), regardless whether it is a minor sin or a grave sin.
for the issues of life [come] out of it For from even a minor one you shall have life and a great reward if you fulfill it—so did Rabbi Tanhuma expound.

Verse 24

Take crooked speech away from yourself Don’t do anything for which people will slander you and make their mouths crooked [when talking] about you.
crooked speech Heb. עקשות. This is an expression of עקום, crooked, as in (Job 9:20): “Though I was innocent, He would prove me perverse (ויעקשני),” and in the Mishnah (Hullin 3:3) “its teeth are crooked and twisted (עקושות).”
devious lips Crooked lips, that the people should not open their mouth wide [when talking] about you.

Verse 25

Let your eyes look forward Let them look to truth and uprightness.
and let your eyelids look straight ahead of you Let them look at what is upright, to straighten your way before you.

Verse 26

Weigh the path of your feet Weigh your way: the loss of a commandment against its reward and the reward of a sin against its loss, and then all your ways will be established.

Verse 27

Turn neither right nor left of the good weight.

Chapter 5

Verse 1

Verse 2

Verse 3

drip honey Heb. נפת, an expression of sweetness.
the lips of a strange woman Apostasy.
her palate Heb. חכה, an expression of חך, a palate.

Verse 4

Verse 5

come near Heb. יתמכו, an expression of nearness.

Verse 6

Lest you weigh the path of life So did the Sages (Tanhuma Ekev 2) expound it: The Holy One, blessed be He, moved away (טלטל) the reward for the commandments and did not explain it [the reward], so that a person should not see a commandment for which the reward is great and cling to it and leave over the other commandments. This is the interpretation: Lest you weigh the ways of the Torah, which one to take and which one to leave, therefore its paths wandered off—God caused them to wander off and He did not make them known. This is the Midrash Aggadah, but according to the sequence of the verses, since after it is written: "And now, children, hearken to me and do not turn away from the sayings of my mouth. Distance your way from her," it appears that he has not yet ended the section dealing with the harlot, and it should be interpreted as follows: Lest you weigh the path of life Do not weigh the path of life in conjunction with that strange one, saying what to do, whether this one or this one [i.e., whether to follow the path of life or the path of the strange woman], for the paths of the harlot have wandered off to the grave, and you will not know how to beware until you wander off and fall.

Verse 7

Verse 8

Verse 9

lest you give others your glory Lest you turn your heart to other gods to give them the glory of your beauty and your praise.
and your years to a cruel one To the prince of Gehinnom.

Verse 10

lest strangers be sated with your strength The prophets of Baal, who collect money with their lies and their hastiness.
and your labors And your toil, with which you were saddened and fatigued.
in the house of an alien In the pagan temple of the pagans.

Verse 11

And you shall moan when your end comes The end will be that you will moan when your end comes.

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

I was almost in all evil There is but a step between me and Gehinnom. (Because of a little thing, I was now "in all evil," for I did not obey my instructors; had I obeyed them, this would not have happened to me. From Rabbi Joseph Kara.)

Verse 15

Drink water from your own cistern From the cistern that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave you for your share, viz. the Law of Moses.
your own cistern This denotes gathered water.
and running water Heb. ונזלים, spring water. In the beginning it is like gathered water, and at the end it gushes out more and more.

Verse 16

May your springs spread out In the end you will acquire disciples, and you will promulgate decisions in public, and you will gain a reputation.
in the squares of the city the rivulets of your water shall spread.

Verse 17

You alone shall have them You alone will be honored by them, and no one else will share your honor with you. Since he says above, "Lest strangers be satisfied with your strength," he says here, "You alone shall have them, and thereby..."

Verse 18

Your fountain shall be blessed, and you shall rejoice with the wife of your youth That is the Torah which you learned in your youth.

Verse 19

you shall always be intoxicated Heb. תשגה. I saw in the words of Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan that תשגה means "you shall always busy yourself," and it is an Arabic expression. He cited as proof, "to seek shegiah," meaning to seek business, but I do not know where it is stated. But our Sages explained it as an expression of intoxication (lit. inadvertence), as its apparent meaning. On account of her love, you shall be inadvertent in your other affairs, because she will guard your things. They said concerning Rabbi Eleazar the son of Pedath, that he was preaching in the lower market and his cloak was lying in the upper market. Once a man came and found a snake coiled on it.

Verse 20

Verse 21

For man's ways are opposite the Lord's eyes, and He weighs, etc. He weighs his ways and knows how many sins and how many merits he has.

Verse 22

His iniquities shall trap Heb. ילכדנו it. shall trap him, like ילכדוהו. and he shall be hanged with the ropes of his sin יתמך, lit. he shall be supported. He shall be hanged, for the one hanged is supported by the ropes with which he is hanged.

Verse 23

He shall die without discipline Because he did not accept discipline.

Chapter 6

Verse 1

My son, if you have stood surety Our Sages explained this as referring to surety in monetary matters, according to its apparent meaning.

Verse 2

Verse 3

go, humble yourself Heb. התרפס [a combination of two words, התר פס], open the palm of your hand for him to pay him his money.
and give your fellow superiority Heb. ורהב. And if he has no money with you, only that you were trapped with the sayings of your mouth by speaking harshly to him, bring many friends to him to beg him to forgive you.
Another explanation: [1] My son, if you stood surety for your Friend After you stood surety for the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is your

“friend,” as it is written (Song 5:16): “This is my beloved and this is my friend”; you undertook at Sinai and in the plains of Moab with a curse and with an oath to observe His commandments.
have given your hand to a stranger You have repented and turned from His ways and clung to the disbelievers to go in their ways.
[2] you have been trapped by the sayings of your mouth You have given your hand to cling to strangers.
[3] Do this, then, my son, and be saved Since you have come into the palm of your Friend at Sinai and you have accepted His Godliness over you, go, humble yourself Heb. התרפס. Humble yourself before Him like a threshold, which is trodden (נרפסת) and stepped on.
and increase your friends Bring many friends who will pray for you before Him. In this manner it is expounded on in Midrash Psalms.

Verse 4

Verse 5

Save yourself like a deer from the hand Hasten and extricate yourself from there like a deer that extricates itself from a man’s hand.

Verse 6

Go to the ant, you sluggard...and become wise Heb. וחכם, and wisen yourself.

Verse 7

for she has no chief who would reprove her and alert her and take out of her hand if she steals anything from her companion, nevertheless...

Verse 8

yet she prepares her bread in the summer, she gathers her food in the harvest She gathers her food, each one of them, and does not rob her companion.

Verse 9

Verse 10

a little folding of the hands The sleeper folds his hands, embrasser in French (abrasar in Provencal,) umfassen [in German], to embrace. In Rashi ms. plier in French [to fold] in German et was falten, to fold a little.

Verse 11

And your poverty shall come like a fast walker If you do this [keep sleeping], your loss and the thing from which you are impoverished shall come to you immediately, like a man walking fast, and your want will come and fill up
like an armed man. who comes quickly to protect his master. These verses are mainly an allegory concerning those who are [too] lazy to engage in the Torah.

Verse 12

walks with a crooked mouth He walks with crooked lips.

Verse 13

he winks with his eyes winks of deceit.
shuffles with his feet He rubs one on the other.
points with his fingers They are all expressions of hinting: one applies to the eye, one applies to the foot, and one applies to the finger, but the main idea is that it is speaking of the wicked.

Verse 14

he incites quarrels between man and his Creator.

Verse 15

suddenly, etc. suddenly Heb. פתע פתאם. This is an expression of immediacy; he will not be aware of the downfall that is ready to descend upon him.

Verse 16

There are six things that the Lord hates, and the seventh is an abomination of His soul The seventh, too, is [included] with them.

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

[one who] speaks Heb. יפיח, lit. he blows. This is an expression of speech since all speech is a product of the breath of the mouth.

Verse 20

Verse 21

tie them Heb. ענדם, an expression of tying, as in (Job 31:36) "I will tie it (אענדנו) as crowns to me."

Verse 22

When you walk in your lifetime.
it shall lead you Heb. תנחה אותך, like תנהיגך.
when you lie down in the grave.
and when you awaken for the resurrection of the dead, to stand in judgment.
it shall speak for you It shall speak on your behalf.

Verse 23

For a commandment is a candle, and the Torah is light Just as light always illuminates, so does the merit of the Torah stand for a person forever, but the merit of the commandment is only for a limited time, like the light of a candle. Another explanation: For a commandment is a candle, etc. The command of the father is a candle. Whoever fulfills the command of his father is as though he takes a candle in his hand to light a dark place, and if he loses anything there he finds it by its light; similarly, whoever fulfills his mother's instruction—it is light to him, and so [Scripture] states (verse 20): "and forsake not the instruction of your mother." It is certain that this verse speaks of the commands of one's father and mother, for it is written (20:20): "If one curses his father or mother, his candle will be put out in the blackest darkness." Now if a person's candle goes out when he does not fulfill the commandments of his parents, conversely when he fulfills the command, his candle lights up (Rabbi Joseph Kara).
and disciplining rebukes are the way of life Disciplining rebukes incline a person to life. It is found that they are the way of life.

Verse 24

to guard you from an evil woman The Torah shall guard you from a woman of evil behavior—perforce, Solomon did not speak of an evil woman, but concerning idolatry, [the prohibition of] which is equal in gravity to all [commandments], for if you say that he meant a real harlot, is that all the reward and the praise of the Torah that it guards one only from a harlot? Rather, perforce this is idolatry, [the prohibition of] which is as stringent as all other [commandments].
from the smoothness of the alien tongue From the sealing of the eyes by an alien tongue.

Verse 25

do not let her captivate you And let her not take away your wisdom from you with her eyelids that she winks at you.

Verse 26

Because a man is brought to a loaf of bread for a harlot He is reduced to poverty and the lack of all good things.

Verse 27

Can a man rake Can a man pick up live coals with the skirt of his garments without burning them? Every expression of חתיה is an expression of raking according to its apparent meaning, that he fills the vessel in the fire.

Verse 28

Verse 29

to his neighbor's wife According to its apparent meaning, and it can also be expounded upon as referring to the idolatry of the pagans.

Verse 30

They will not despise a thief, etc. And if he is found, he will pay sevenfold, etc. One who commits adultery with a woman The three of them

are combined in one statement. If a thief commits a theft, he should not be despised as much as the adulterer. Why? Because he steals in order to sate his hunger, and perhaps he has nothing to eat. And, when he is found, he can rectify his sin with payment; at the most, he will pay sevenfold i.e., many times the double payment and even fifty times for one. Some explain “sevenfold” as referring to one who steals an ox and his trappings and slaughters it, who pays five cattle and double payment of the trappings (totalling seven). he must give all he owns lit. he must give all the property of his house. And, even if he must sell all he owns because of this, he can nevertheless rectify it, and from the beginning he did it because of hunger. But...

Verse 31

Verse 32

One who commits adultery with a woman is devoid of sense since he does not do it because of hunger.
one who would destroy his soul—he will do it The lewd act.

Verse 33

He will find wounds and disgrace Lesions are sent for idolatry and immorality.

Verse 34

for jealousy For the jealousy of the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is the Mighty One over all, will be aroused to mete out retribution upon him, and He will not have pity on the day of vengeance.

Verse 35

He will not have regard for any money to expiate for his denial of Him and his cleaving to idolatry. And our Rabbis expounded (Tosefta Baba Kamma 7:3): They will not despise a thief—This is one who steals away from his friend and goes to the study hall and engages in Torah. If he is found, he will pay sevenfold. [The intention is that] eventually, he will be appointed as a judge, and he will render legal decisions, for “sevenfold” refers only to the Torah, as it is said (Ps. 12:7): “refined sevenfold.”

Chapter 7

Verse 1

Verse 2

like the apple of your eyes The pupil of the eye, which is like darkness, like the darkness of night.

Verse 3

Verse 4

“You are my sister” (Draw her near to you.)
a kinsman Heb. מדע, a kinsman, as in (Ruth 3: 2): “Boaz our kinsman (מדעתנו),” our close relative; i.e., draw her near to you always.

Verse 5

Verse 6

Verse 7

I discerned Heb. אבינה, I discerned and I saw.

Verse 8

next to her corner The corner of the harlot and of the pagan house of worship.

Verse 9

Verse 10

And behold a woman As its apparent meaning. Another explanation: One of the enticers.
the nakedness of a harlot Heb. שית, as in (II Sam. 10:4): “their buttocks (שתותיהם),” i.e., the nakedness of a harlot.
with her heart besieged Heb. ונצרת לב. As a besieged city is surrounded by bulwarks, so is this one’s heart surrounded by lewdness and foolishness.

Verse 11

and rebellious Heb. וסררת, turning away from the road.

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

I had to bring peace offerings I prepared a great feast, for today I sacrificed my vows and my peace offering.

Verse 15

and I have found you In order that I find you.

Verse 16

covers Heb. מרבדים. Garments of freedom and beauty; a similar term is found at the end of the book (31:22): "She made covers for herself."
I have bedecked my couch Heb. רבדתי, I have adorned.
with superior braided work of Egypt Heb. חטבות אטון מצרים, praiseworthy, high quality linen garments coming from Egypt, where linen is common, as it is written in the Book of Isaiah (19: 9): "And those who work at flax... shall be ashamed." braided work Heb. אטון. The Aramaic translation of מיתריהם, their ropes (Num. 4:32), is אטוניהון.

Verse 17

I fanned Heb. נפתי. I fanned the scent as one fans with a scarf in a perfumery to bring the scent from above down below. Dunash (Teshuvoth Dunash p. 22) defines it as an expression of smoking, which he states has no comparison.

Verse 18

Verse 19

For the man is not at home You have seen that the Holy One, blessed be He, has removed His Shechinah and has given all good to the pagans.

Verse 20

the bag of money He has slain the righteous among them.
on the appointed day Heb. ליום הכסא. At the fixed appointed time, and similarly (Ps. 81:4), "At the appointed time for the day of our festival."

Verse 21

She swayed him the one devoid of sense, to her.
with all her talk with which she is accustomed to familiarize men.
she entices him from the road.

Verse 22

and as a viper Heb. וכעכס. This is the venom of a snake.
to the chastisement of a fool Like a snake that runs quickly as an agent of the Holy One, blessed be He, to chastise the fool who is condemned by the Omnipresent, blessed be He, so does this one run after her until he stumbles on her, and her arrow splits his liver.

Verse 23

as a bird hastens to run to a snare, and it does not know that the snare was spread out there for the life of the bird.

Chapter 8

Verse 1

Will not wisdom call out Does not the Torah announce for you the things mentioned below in this section?

Verse 2

Verse 3

at the entrance of the roof Heb. קרת, the ceiling above the gate, where people sit.
she cries Heb. תרנה, she cries, and what does she say? “To you, O men, I call.”

Verse 4

Verse 5

Verse 6

Hearken for I will speak noble things Words of nobility and importance.

Verse 7

Verse 8

there is nothing twisted or crooked in them There is no crookedness.

Verse 9

Verse 10

gold Heb. חרוץ. A type of gold.

Verse 11

than pearls Heb. מפנינים, pearls.
cannot be compared to it They will not equal its value.

Verse 12

I dwelt [beside] cunning Beside cunning, for since a man has learned Torah, cunning about every matter enters into him.

Verse 13

Fear of the Lord is to hate evil This is the discipline that wisdom announces to the people.

Verse 14

Verse 15

Kings reign with me for the judges and the judgments I teach them.

Verse 16

Verse 17

I will love those who love me Heb. אהבי. [This is the reading.] The text is written: אוהביה, those who love her. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: "I will love those who love the Torah." I heard this from Rabbi Aaron in the name of Rabbi Nathan.
I will love Heb. אהב, like אאהב.
will find me Heb. ימצאנני. There is an extra "nun," denoting fifty. I will allow him to find the fifty gates of understanding.

Verse 18

Verse 19

Verse 20

Verse 21

There is substance to give inheritance Heb. ש׳, lit. there is. There is with me a great inheritance.

Verse 22

at the beginning of His way before the creation of the world.

Verse 23

I was enthroned, from the beginning Heb. נסכתי, an expression of (Ezek. 35): "Princes (נסיכי) of the sons of man."

Verse 24

I was created Heb. חוללתי.

Verse 25

before the mountains were sunk within the water.

Verse 26

the land and the outsides The land of Israel and other lands.
and the beginning of the dust of the earth The first man.

Verse 27

when He drew a circle over the face of the deep When He drew the circle of the earth over the water, to draw a boundary that it may not pass.

חוג is an expression of encircling, as in (Isa. 44: 13): "and with a compass (ובמחוגה) he rounds it." (Compas in French, zirkel in German, as in Gen. 29: 17, Isa. 5:22, 44:13, and Job 22: 14.)

Verse 28

when He strengthened the fountains of the deep When He made mighty the fountains of the deep.

Verse 29

when He gave the sea its boundary and decreed upon the Reed Sea when he created it, on the condition that it split before Moses.
when He established the foundations of the earth Heb. בחקו from an expression of engraving (חקוי), as in (Isa. 49:16): "Behold on [My] hands I have engraved you (חקתיך)," and so (Ezek. 43:14): "And from the bottom (מחיק) upon the ground."

Verse 30

a nursling Heb. אמון, one that was reared beside Him, an expression of (Lam. 4:5): "They that were reared (האמנים) amid crimson.
every day יום יום, lit. a day a day, two thousand years.

Verse 31

playing in the habitable world of His earth All the generations of the wicked that were from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham, I was laughing at them.
and [having] my delights I waited until the generation of the desert came and accepted me.

Verse 32

Verse 33

and do not put it to naught Heb. תפרעו, and do not put my discipline to naught.

Verse 34

to watch Heb. לשקד
by my doors [to be the] first to enter into the study hall and the synagogue and [the] last to leave.

Chapter 9

Verse 1

Wisdom has built her house With wisdom has the Holy One, blessed be He, built the world.
she has hewn her seven pillars The seven days of Creation. Another explanation: This refers to the seven books of the Torah, since (Num. 10:35f.) "And it came about when the ark traveled..." is an individual book, as is stated in tractate Shabbath (116a).

Verse 2

She has prepared her meat, she has mingled her wine She has mixed it with water, like strong wine, that is unfit to drink unmixed.
she has even set her table All creations of liquid and solid.

Verse 3

She has sent her maidens Adam and Eve.

Verse 4

“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here” and learn it and become wise.

Verse 5

of the wine I have mingled Heb. מסכתי.

Verse 6

Leave, you simpletons the way of simplicity and live.
and step Heb. מסכתי, an expression of stepping, as in (Job 23:11): “To his steps (באשרו) my foot was held fast.”

Verse 7

and he who reproves a wicked man, that is his blemish It is a blemish to the one who reproves [him], for this one berates him and does not heed him. This is a warning that it is forbidden to talk with those who entice to worship idols, even to reprove them and to draw them near.

Verse 8

Verse 9

Give a wise man, and he will become yet wiser To a worthy pupil, and the Midrash Aggadah (Tanchuma, Vayakhel 6) states: It was said to Noah, “From every clean animal, etc.” (Gen. 7:2), and when he went out, “And he took from all clean animals, etc.” (ibid. 8:20). He said, “What did the Holy One, blessed be He, see to increase the number of these? It is only because He wished that I offer up some of them.”
teach a righteous man wisdom, and he will increase in learning from his own knowledge in addition to what he heard.

Verse 10

and the knowledge of the holy ones is the root of understanding.

Verse 11

and they will add to you years of life Years of life are those of sustenance and wealth.

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

Verse 16

and whoever is devoid of sense (lit. and one devoid of sense.) and she says to him these words. What does she say to him?

Verse 17

Stolen water is sweet The pleasure afforded by intimacy with a single woman does not equal that afforded by intimacy with a married woman. Also, regarding the commandments (other editions: sectarianism), stolen water is sweet, for they were afraid to do it in public, but did it in secret.

Chapter 10

Verse 1

Proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes his father happy This is the Holy One, blessed be He (Midrash); another explanation: his actual father.
but a foolish son is the grief of his mother He is always with his mother at home, and she sees his foolishness and is troubled. And according to the allegory, a foolish son, like Jeroboam the son of Nebat,
is the grief of his mother, the grief of his nation.

Verse 2

Treasures of wickedness will not avail For he was boasting with his riches, as it is stated (Hosea 12:9): “And Ephraim said: Surely I have become rich, etc.”
but charity will save from death And if you ask, “A righteous man who squanders his property for charity—from where will he sustain himself?”

Verse 3

The Lord will not starve the soul of the righteous [This is the answer to the previous question.] but the destruction [wrought by] the wicked will cast [them] down It will thrust them down and cause them to fall.

Verse 4

A poor man makes a deceitful scale Whoever is impoverished in [his knowledge of] Torah promulgates false decisions.
deceitful scales Scales of deceit. According to its simple meaning, it refers to merchants.
and the hand of those who make true decisions The upright, who decide a matter truly and justly without injustice.

Verse 5

Verse 6

but violence shall cover the mouth of the wicked The violence shall cover their mouths and kill them.

Verse 7

The mention of a righteous man is for a blessing Whoever mentions a righteous man blesses him.
but the name of the wicked shall rot Decay develops in their name, for no one wishes to mention his [the wicked man's] name, and it is automatically forgotten.

Verse 8

The wise-hearted takes commandments This alludes to our teacher, Moses, for all Israel were busy with the plunder of Egypt, and he was busy with the commandments, as is it said (Exod. 13:19): "And Moses took Joseph's bones, etc."
but he who talks foolishly will weary Heb. יִלָּבֵט, an expression of weariness. It appears in Sifre, in the section commencing (Num. 11:1): "And the people were as complainers." They said, "How much have we wearied (נִתְלַבַּטְנוּ) on the way!"

Verse 9

will be broken Heb. יִוָּדַע, will be broken and chastised, as in (Jud. 8:16): "And with them he broke (וַיִּוַּדַע) the men of Succoth."

Verse 10

He who winks his eye causes grief That is the one who entices a person to evil with his winks.

Verse 11

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked, etc. Their mouth conceals the violence that is in their heart, for they talk smoothly with their lips, but hatred is hidden in their heart. Now the interpretation of this verse is not the same as the above verse (8); the context is indicative of their meaning.

Verse 12

Hatred arouses quarrels Even a sin that was forgotten is remembered though additional iniquities. The final hatred comes and arouses them, for Ezekiel reproved Israel for the transgressions of Egypt (Ezek. 20:7), "And I said to them, 'Every man shall cast away the abominations of his eyes, etc.'" How many (years was) this hatred hidden, that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not mention it to them until now, when they added transgressions to their sins.
but love covers all transgressions When Israel improves their deeds, the Holy One, blessed be He, conceals their transgressions.

Verse 13

Wisdom is found in the lips of the understanding When a person reproves an understanding individual, he replies to him, "I have sinned," e.g. David, who said to Nathan, "I have sinned" (11 Sam. 12:13).
but a rod is for the body of one devoid of sense But one who is devoid of sense does not listen until he is smitten, like Pharaoh.

Verse 14

Wise men store up knowledge They guard it in their heart so that they do not forget it.

Verse 15

The wealth of the rich in Torah.
is the city of his strength to him.
the destruction of the poor is their poverty The poverty that they did not engage in the Torah is their destruction.

Verse 16

The act of the righteous is for life [This is to be understood] according to its apparent meaning, but the Midrash Aggadah states: Solomon performed the construction of the Temple for the life of Israel, for their atonement.
what the wicked bring in What Manasseh brought in, for he brought in the image—that was for sin.

Verse 17

The way to life He who keeps discipline—that is the way to life.
but he who forsakes reproof misleads himself and others.

Verse 18

He who covers up hatred has false lips The flatterer has false lips, and he hides hatred in his heart.
and he who spreads slander is a fool Heb. דבה, a rumor about his friend, about which people will converse (דובבין).

Verse 19

In a multitude of words, transgression will not be avoided He who talks too much brings on sin.
and he who holds back his lips he is wise.

Verse 20

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver for he knows how to reprove.
the heart of the wicked is worth little for he does not heed the reproof of the righteous man. Midrash Rabbi Tanhuma (Ki Thissa 6) states: This was stated concerning Iddo the prophet, who called [in prophecy] about the altar in Beth-El, and Jeroboam, although his hand had become stiff, did not heed the reproof, as it is said (I Kings 13:6): "Entreat now the Lord your God, etc."; but not "my God, etc"; (ad loc.): "and the king's hand was drawn back to him, and it was as before." Just as before, he was standing and burning sacrifices to idols, so was it at the end.

Verse 21

The lips of the righteous will feed many, etc. Many eat in his merit and because of his prayer.

Verse 22

The blessing of the Lord will bring riches, etc. One need not toil to gain wealth, for it is enough with the blessing that He blesses him.

Verse 23

As it is sport for a fool to carry out a sinful plot Heb. זמה, a plot of sins.
[so is] wisdom like sport to a man of understanding ; i.e., in his eyes, it is easy to do.

Verse 24

The dread of a wicked man that will befall him What he fears will befall him. The generation of the Dispersion said, "Lest we scatter" (Gen. 11:4), and their end was that it is written (ibid. 8), "And the Lord scattered them from there."
but the desire of the righteous He will grant He Who has the power to grant it.

Verse 25

When the whirlwind passes, the wicked man is no more Suddenly the fury of a whirlwind comes, and the wicked man is cut off from his place.

Verse 26

Verse 27

Verse 28

The expectation of the righteous [will result in] joy Eventually, it will be realized, and they will rejoice.
but the hope of the wicked shall be lost for it will not come.

Verse 29

The way of the Lord is a stronghold for the innocent, but ruin for those who work iniquity For they do not follow it, and it exacts retribution from them.

Verse 30

The righteous will not collapse forever When he collapses, his collapse is not a permanent collapse, but he will fall and rise.

Verse 31

The mouth of the righteous man speaks wisdom Heb. יגוב, speaks, an expression of (Isa. 57: 9): "the speech (גיב) of the lips."

Verse 32

the lips of a righteous man know how to please They know how to please and placate his Creator, and they know how to please the people and how to make peace among them.

Chapter 11

Verse 1

Verse 2

When willful wickedness comes, etc. but with the modest is wisdom comes wisdom.

Verse 3

The innocence of the upright leads them Heb. תנחם, will guide them.
but the distortion of the treacherous robs them Heb. ישדם, like ישדדם

Verse 4

Verse 5

Verse 6

but in the destruction In the destruction that they perpetrate, they are caught; the verse is transposed. [It means] "and the treacherous in the destruction will be caught."

Verse 7

When a wicked man dies, hope is lost The hope of all who trust in him.
and the expectation of his children is lost Heb. אונים. The expectation of his children, who are the products of his strength, is lost, for no good will come to them in his merit. But when the righteous die, their children have trust in their righteousness.

Verse 8

A righteous man is extricated from trouble when the wicked man dies, and this is connected to the preceding verse.

Verse 9

With his mouth, the flatterer The flatterer who entices his friend on an evil way, destroys him with his mouth.
but with knowledge, righteous men are extricated But the righteous man is extricated from [the flatterer] with the knowledge of the Torah, which warned concerning him (Deut. 13: 9): "You shall not consent to him, etc."

Verse 10

Verse 11

the ceiling is raised The ceiling of the Temple will be preserved at its height from falling. As long as the kings of Judah were upright, their prayer preserved the Temple.

Verse 12

but a man of understanding is silent when the one devoid of sense despises him, like Saul, as it is written (I Sam. 10:27): "And they despised him and brought him no gift; and he was as one who kept his peace."

Verse 13

Verse 14

Without strategy When trouble befalls Israel, and they do not put their heart to understand, to fast and to repent, the people will fall.

Verse 15

will be broken by it The wicked man who gave his heart as surety to idolatry.
but he who hates hand-claspers Those who clasp hands with the enticers to follow their counsel. But our Rabbis expounded this in regard to surety in monetary matters.

Verse 16

draws near to honor Heb. תתמך. The people of Israel constantly draw near to the honor of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Torah. (
but strong men draw near to riches that it should not be lost to them.)

Verse 17

does himself good He does good to his kin. A kind man lit. a man of kindness, a man who is kind.
but a cruel one troubles his own flesh But the cruel one troubles his kin.

Verse 18

A wicked man earns illusory wages The wage of a wicked man lies to him. He thinks that his prosperity will remain, but all is lost.
but he who sows charity [receives] a true reward But he who sows charity, it is a wage of truth, for he is surely confident that he will receive his wage at the end.
שכר cornial in Old French. [This appears to mean a weir in several dialects; i.e., a fence placed in the water to catch fish.] Manuscripts of Rashi yield: eclusse or esklusa, which is e'cluse [in modern French]; in German wasserschleuse, a lock or a sluice gate). Like a man who locks a canal in order to gather fish, and he is confident that he will find many fish there. A similar instance is (Isa. 19:10): "all who make dams (שכר) for still ponds."

Verse 19

The truth of charity Heb. כֵּן, the truth of charity is that its end is for life, as in (Num. 27:7): “The daughters of Zelofchad speak right (כֵּן).”

Verse 20

Verse 21

From hand to hand From the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, to his hand shall come to him his wage, and he will not be cleansed of the evil that he committed.

Verse 22

[As] a gold ring in a swine’s snout that bemires it in the dungheap, so is a Torah scholar who turns away from the good way.
from whom sense has departed Who has departed from the Torah.

Verse 23

the hope of the wicked is wrath They are assured and hope for Gehinnom.

Verse 24

There is one who scatters his money for such things as charity, and he is given more.
and one who withholds himself from [giving] what is proper, only for a loss it will be to him.

Verse 25

A generous person [lit. a soul of blessing,] who is generous with his money, and every expression of blessing is fuison in Old French, excess.
and he who sates who sates the poor.
shall himself become sated as well He shall be sated with good.

Verse 26

He who keeps back grain [who refrains] from teaching Torah.

Verse 27

He who desires good Who wishes to lead the people in the good way and reproves and chastises them.
seeks acceptance He desires that the Holy One, blessed be He, accept them and and be reconciled with them. Appaisement in Old French, besanftigen in German.

Verse 28

Verse 29

He who inherits the wind will trouble his household A lazy man, who always inherits the wind and does not toil in Torah or in work, will

ultimately trouble the members of his household, for they will have nothing to eat.

Verse 30

The fruit of a righteous man The reward of the fruit of the righteous man's deeds is a tree of life for the world.
and the wise man acquires souls Whoever is wise acquires souls for himself. he teaches them the good way, and they are his as though he had acquired them, as the matter is stated (Gen. 12:5): "And the souls that they acquired in Haran."

Verse 31

Behold! The righteous man will be requited on earth Why should the wicked man feel confident when he prospers? Does he not see that the righteous man is requited the payment of the sins he has committed while he is still on earth, during his lifetime?
surely a wicked man and a sinner Surely the wicked will ultimately be requited, either during his lifetime or after his death.

Chapter 12

Verse 1

Verse 2

A good man will obtain Heb. יְפִיק. He will draw satisfaction from the Holy One, blessed be He, to bring goodness to the world.
but a man of evil devices will condemn One who has evil devices will condemn. He will condemn the people to bring evil [upon them], and so he states (Ecc. 9:18): "but one sinner destroys much good."

Verse 3

A man will not be established with wickedness Heb. יִכּוֹן, will not be firmly established.

Verse 4

is like rot A worm that penetrates the bones and grinds them. So is an embarrassing, bad wife, whose deeds are shameful.

Verse 5

Verse 6

The words of the wicked are to lurk for blood They take counsel to murder directly or through false testimony.
but the mouth of the upright when they hear [the wicked's] counsel, will save the victims, for they will reveal [the wicked's] plot, or if they are witnesses, [the upright] will prove them to be collusive.

Verse 7

The wicked will be overthrown Heb. הפוך, like להפוך, to overthrow. Like a sudden overthrow they are overthrown [lit. like an overthrow in a second].
and they are no more They are destroyed, e.g. Sodom.
but the house of the righteous will stand Will endure.

Verse 8

According to his intelligence a man is praised Whether he possesses little or much intelligence, he will receive his reward according to his intelligence.
but he whose heart has turned away He who moved his heart completely away from the Torah will be despised.
Heb. נעוה, as in (Isa. 21:3): "I have become confused (נעויתי) from hearing," and similarly (I Sam. 20:30): "the son of a straying (נעות) woman deserving of punishment." And it is possible to say that נעוה means one whose heart has strayed, from the expression נע ונד, moving and wandering, and as one says זעוה, horror, from the root זע, stirred.

Verse 9

Better is he who is lightly esteemed in his own eyes and became a slave to himself
that one who is honored in his own eyes and says, "It is disgraceful for me to toil at labor, for I am one of the great men,"—he will ultimately lack bread.

Verse 10

A righteous man has regard for the desire of his beast What his beasts and his household members need.

Verse 11

He who tills his soil will be sated with bread To be understood according to its apparent meaning, but according to its allegorical meaning, [this means] he who constantly reviews his studies lest they be forgotten.

Verse 12

The wicked man yearns to gain sustenance and maintenance from the prey of the wicked, who prey on people with robbery and violence.
but the root of the righteous yields what it is fit to yield, and that is the fruit.

Verse 13

Because of the transgression of the lips Because of the transgression of the lips of the generation of the Flood, who said (Job 21:15): "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him?" an evil snare came upon them, and Noah, the righteous man, came out of the trouble.

Verse 14

From the fruit of a man's mouth From the reward of the mouth of those who engage in the Torah, they eat the good of this world, and the principal remains intact for them for the world to come.

Verse 15

Verse 16

A fool’s anger is known within the day On the day he is angry, on that very day he lets his anger be known, for he starts a quarrel and berates his fellow in public, and his anger has no restraint. But the clever man conceals the shame and does not hasten to quarrel. And the Midrash Aggadah states: On the day the first man was created, his sin was known, but the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is clever, did not wish to destroy His creatures. He concealed his shame and postponed His decree from Adam’s day to His day, which is one thousand years.

Verse 17

He who speaks the truth will testify justly He who speaks the truth will testify just testimony at a trial to justify the innocent.

Verse 18

There is one who speaks Heb. בוטה, speaks, as in (Lev. 5:4): “to pronounce (לבטה) with the lips.”
like the jabs of a sword For he stirs up the people and causes them to kill.
but the tongue of the wise which brings peace between one man and his fellow.
brings healing to that speech.

Verse 19

A true tongue will be established forever It will be established and will endure.
just for a moment In a fleeting moment, it perishes and leaves, for falsehood has no feet.

Verse 20

There is deceit in the heart of those who plot evil and since they are occupied with their thoughts of deceit, they have no joy—but for the counselors of peace, there is joy.

Verse 21

No wrong shall be caused for the righteous It will not happen. No sin will chance before him inadvertently.

Verse 22

Verse 23

A cunning man conceals knowledge Even in his wisdom, he is discreet—he surely conceals words of foolishness; but the heart of the fool announces foolishness aloud.

Verse 24

The hand of the diligent The upright.

will rule Will make wealthy.

Verse 25

If there is concern in a man’s heart, let him cast it down Let him divert his attention from it.
and a good word will make it cheerful Let him engage in the Torah which will cause the concern in his heart to rejoice and save him therefrom. And according to the one who says, “he should tell it to others,” this is [the meaning of] the end of the verse: And a good word with which his friend consoles him will cause the concern to rejoice.

Verse 26

The righteous is more generous than his neighbor Heb. יתר. The righteous renounces his measures and passes over them. יתר large in French. That is freigebig in German, generous.
the wicked who is accustomed to harming will lead them astray.

Verse 27

He will not roast This is connected to the above verse; that is to say that the way of the wicked will mislead him, and he will not roast the prey of his deceit.
He will not roast; he will not succeed with his deceit. As he [Solomon] spoke with a figure of prey, an expression of roasting is appropriate, for the successful hunter hunts the birds and roasts them in fire.
but the wealth of an honest man is precious Heb. יקר חרוץ. This is an inverted verse. But the wealth of a man who is honest is precious.
honest Heb. חרוץ, one who deals honestly, as in (10:4): “and the hand of those who make true decisions (חרוצים) will make [them] rich.”

Verse 28

In the road of charity is life, and [on] the way of its path of charity.
there is no death He will not die.

Chapter 13

Verse 1

A wise son... his father’s discipline This is an elliptical verse: a wise son asks for and loves his father’s discipline. Some say: Because of the father’s discipline, he is wise.
but a scorner does not listen to rebuke For he does not accept reproof.

Verse 2

From the fruit of man’s mouth he will eat good From the reward of his Torah, he will eat the good in this world and the principal will exist in the world to come.
but the desire of the treacherous is violence Heb. ונפש. The desire of the treacherous is violence, as in (Gen. 23:8): “If it is your desire (נפשכם)” and (Ps. 27:12): “Do not give me for the desire of (בנפש) my adversaries.”

Verse 3

one who opens his lips wide Heb. פשק, opens his lips to speak constantly all his desire, from (Ezek. 16:25): "And you spread wide (ותפשקי) your legs," an expression of wideness.

Verse 4

The soul of the lazy man desires but has nothing His soul desires all good, but has nothing.
but the soul of the diligent shall be sated The upright who eat from the toil of their hands. This is its meaning according to its simple interpretation. According to its allegorical meaning, in the future he will see the glory of the Torah scholar and long for it, but he will not achieve it.

Verse 5

The righteous man hates a false word The righteous man hates a false word, but the wicked accepts it.
disgraces and embarrasses the people therewith.

Verse 6

but wickedness brings ruin upon the sinner Heb. חטאת, lit. sin. Like חטאת, a sinner, but since he is completely wicked, he calls him חטאת, sin. The meaning is that his wickedness will bring ruin upon the sinner and humble him. Every expression of טלוף means ruin and stumbling, like (below 19:3) "A person's foolishness ruins (תסלף) his way," and brings evil upon him.

Verse 7

There is one who feigns riches He shows himself to be rich. Another explanation: There is a man who becomes rich in the end but has nothing in the beginning, and there is one who comes to poverty from great riches. Another explanation: There is one who becomes wealthy by robbing the poor, but in the end he has nothing, and there is one who becomes poor by scattering his money and giving it to the poor, but great wealth is in store for him.

Verse 8

The ransom of a man's soul is his wealth A man's wealth is the ransom of his soul, for he performed charity with it.
as long as the poor man has not heard a rebuke As long as he does not let the poor man hear a rebuke, i.e., he gives to him and does not embarrass him. Another explanation: The ransom of a man's soul is his wealth His Torah.
but a poor man in the words of Torah, did not hear a rebuke He does not know to turn away from evil, since he is not cautious. The Midrash Aggadah interprets it as speaking of the half-shekel, which Scripture levied on all Israel and made the poor and the rich equal in that respect—so that the poor does not hear a rebuke from the rich, saying to him, "My share is greater than your share in the public sacrifices."

Verse 9

will ebb away Heb. ידעך, an expression of springing, for the flame springs and is cut off.

Verse 10

Only with wickedness does one cause quarrels Heb. מצה, controversy.
but there is wisdom with those who take counsel But wisdom lies with those who behave with counsel.

Verse 11

Wealth gotten by vanity One who makes his study in bundles. shall be diminished For he will forget it little by little.

Verse 12

Hope deferred He relies on his friend and does nothing.
makes the heart sick Heb. מחלה, brings sickness to the heart. This מחלה is not a noun like (Ex. 23:25): "And I will remove sickness (מחלה) from your midst," but like (Lev. 11:6): "bringing up (מעלת) the cud."
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life lit. but a tree of life is a desire fulfilled. This is inverted; i.e., a desire fulfilled is like a tree of life. The hope that the Holy One, blessed be He, had hoped for Israel and looked forward for them to repent—brought them ultimately to heartsickness when they did not repent. And when His desire is fulfilled—that they comply with His will—it is a tree of life to them.

Verse 13

He who despises a thing will be pledged to it Heb. יחבל. He who despises one of the words of the Torah will ultimately be taken for it as a pledge.
but he who reveres a commandment will be rewarded lit. will be paid. He will receive a reward. Midrash Tehillim expounds: "He who despises a thing will be pledged to it" concerning David, who said before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Of what use are the madmen that You created?" He replied, "By your life, you will ultimately need madness." When he came before Achish to feign madness, "and he let his saliva run down upon his beard, etc." (I Sam. 21:14).

Verse 14

The instruction of a wise man is a spring of life for he teaches him to turn away from the snares of death.

Verse 15

but the way of the treacherous is harsh It is harsh for him and for others.

Verse 16

Every cunning man acts with forethought He performs his deeds with forethought, like David: "Let them seek for my lord, the king, a young girl, a virgin, etc." (I Kings 1:2).
but a fool exposes [his] stupidity This is Ahasuerus (Esther 2:3): "Let the king appoint, etc." They knew that he would not marry them all. Therefore, whoever had a daughter concealed her.

Verse 17

A wicked messenger falls into evil like Balaam, to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, said (Num. 22:35): "Go with the men," but he dealt

wickedly to entice Balak to follow his evil counsel; therefore, he fell by the sword.
but a faithful emissary brings healing This is Moses, our teacher.

Verse 18

Poverty and disgrace Poverty and disgrace come upon him who spurns discipline.

Verse 19

pleases the soul When a person's desire comes to him it pleases his soul. Therefore, it is an abomination to a fool to turn away from evil because it pleases him to gratify his desire.
fulfilled Heb. נהיה, lit. is. Another explanation: a desire fulfilled The Holy One, blessed be He, desires that Israel do His will, and when His desire is fulfilled, it pleases Him. And it is the abomination of the wicked that they turn away from their evil to gratify their desire.

Verse 20

He who goes with the wise will become wise, but he who befriends the fools Who joins fools to be his friends.
will be broken Heb. ירוע, will be shattered.

Verse 21

Evil will pursue the sinners As for a wicked man, his wickedness pursues him to his destruction.

Verse 22

A good man will leave an inheritance of his merit and his property to his sons' sons, but a sinner does not leave over an inheritance to his sons, for his wealth and his property are laid away for the righteous, as it is written (Esther 8:2): "And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."

Verse 23

An abundance of food is the result of the plowing of the poor I saw in the great Masorah [on the words רב אכל]: The word רב appears thirty-three times with a "kamatz," but this one has a short "kamatz," and it is joined to the word אכל, food, with a "makkaf" (hyphen); and I saw there that אכל is vowelized with a "pattah" (i.e., a "segol" which is a small "pattah"), and it is accented on the first syllable, as in (Gen. 41:35): "all the food (אכל) of the good years." According to its vowelization, this is its interpretation: Much grain comes to the world through the plowing of the poor people; i.e., much Torah emanates from pupils whose teachers learn from them through their debate concerning the halachah.
and some perish And many of them perish from the world because [they have] no propriety, for they do not behave properly; and concerning the grain, some grain suffers because of its owner, who does not separate its tithes and its gifts for the poor as is proper. Our Sages explained in tractate Hagigah (4b) "And some perish without justice," concerning the messenger of the angel of death, who changes one name for another and causes the death of one whose time has not come. But, if it [this explanation] is so, the end of the verse has nothing to do with its beginning.

Verse 24

He who holds back his rod His end will be that he will hate his son because he will see him getting into mischief.
disciplines him early He always chastises him in the morning.

Verse 25

to sate his appetite It always seems to him that he is satisfied. (shall feel want It does not seem to them that they are satisfied.)

Chapter 14

Verse 1

The wisest of women Heb. חכמות, vowelized with a "patach," is not a noun, but [it means that] the wisest of women build their houses, for they are preserved by them, like the wife of On the son of Peleth, as is explained in the chapter entitled "Chelek."
but a foolish one Heb. ואולת. But a foolish woman.
tears it down with her hands She tears down her house. This is Korah's wife.]

Verse 2

He who fears the Lord goes in his uprightness Heb. ירא ה', he who fears the Lord, and he who is crooked in his ways...
despises Him The Holy One, blessed be He.

Verse 3

In a fool's mouth is a staff of haughtiness A stick of haughtiness, like Pharaoh, who said (Ex. 5: 2): "Who is the Lord that I should hearken to His voice?"
but the lips of the wise guard them Heb. תשמורם, like תשמרם. They guard the wise.

Verse 4

Without oxen the manger is empty Without oxen, the manger is empty, for not even straw is found in the house.
empty Heb. בר, clean and empty. This means that without Torah scholars, there is no proper instruction.

Verse 5

but he who speaks lies and always speaks lies, is a false witness.

Verse 6

The scorner sought wisdom When he needs wisdom, he does not find it in his heart.

Verse 7

Go far away from a foolish wisdom. Do not always associate with him.
or you will know lips of knowledge You will eventually not know wisdom.

Verse 8

The wisdom of a cunning man Heb. ערום, he who is wise. is to understand his way To weigh his paths.
but the folly of the fools That is the deceit in their hearts. It will ultimately bring them to foolishness.

Verse 9

Amends for guilt plead for the fools For they sin and have to give money to the one against whom they sinned. And their amends, which they bring him with their money, will plead for them, like the Philistines, as it is stated (I Sam. 6:4f.): "five hemorrhoids of gold, etc. and you shall give honor to the God of Israel. Perhaps He will lighten His hand from upon you."
אשם (amende in French, geldstrafe in German) a fine.
but there is good will among the upright apaisement in French (cf. above 11:27), appeasement. The Holy One, blessed be He, is pleased with them.

Verse 10

One's heart knows the bitterness of his soul His toil and labor that he toiled with the Torah. Therefore, in his joy a stranger shall not mingle. Another explanation: One's heart knows the bitterness of his soul Israel, who are of embittered spirit in exile, for they are killed for the sanctification of the Name—in their joy no stranger shall mingle in the future.

Verse 11

Verse 12

There is a way that seems right to a man He commits a transgression and says, "There is no transgression in it." Another explanation: There is a way that seems right to a man The way of laziness seemed right to Esau, who was a man of the field, "but its end etc."

Verse 13

Even with laughter that the Holy One, blessed be He, laughs with the heathens in this world. Their heart will ache in the future, and so Scripture says (Isa. 65:14): "And you shall cry out from sorrow of heart."

Verse 14

The one with an impure heart shall have his fill from his ways Esau.
and above him is a good man Jacob.

Verse 15

A fool believes their words and is enticed after them. Another explanation: with laughter the heart aches It is sport for a fool to carry out a sinful plot (above 10:23), and ultimately, his heart will ache. The one with an impure heart is a wicked man, as in (below 26:23) "Impure (סיגים) silver." סיג is the name of the dross. סוג is the silver mixed with the dross.
and above him is a good man And above the wicked man will be the righteous man.

A fool believes talebearers,
but a cunning man understands his steps Heb. לאשרו, his steps. He waits to quarrel until he knows the matter correctly.

Verse 16

A wise man fears retribution.
and turns away from evil From the evil.
but a fool passes vigorously He strengthens himself to pass vigorously.
and slips Heb. ובוטח, and slips and falls to the ground, as in (Jer. 12:5): "and in the peaceful you slip (בוטח)," and Jonathan renders: את מתבטח ונפיל, meaning "you slip and fall." Others explain this as confidence. In his palace, he is confident, saying, "The evil will not befall me."

Verse 17

A quick tempered man who hastens to avenge his anger.
and a man of sinful plots Thoughts of counsels of evil.

Verse 18

make knowledge a crown Heb. יכתרו, they make it a crown for their head,
and ultimately...

Verse 19

The evil bend down before the good in the future.

Verse 20

The poor man is hated even by his friend Even by his friends who accompany him to his wedding and by his close friends. even Heb. גם, an expression meaning even.
The poor man is hated The ignoramus, who does not know how to behave properly.

Verse 21

Verse 22

Verse 23

In every toil In every toil of work, there is a gain, but in words of vanity, there is only loss.

Verse 24

The crown of the wise is their wealth that they are rich in Torah.
the folly of the foolish is folly The ruin of the fools is the folly that they neglected to learn wisdom.

Verse 25

Verse 26

In the fear of the Lord is a strong promise It is stated concerning Abraham (Gen. 22:12): “Now I know that you are a God-fearing man,” and He promised him: “For I will bless, you, etc.”
and he will be... for his sons He.
a shelter For they will take shelter and hide in the shadow of his merit.

Verse 27

Verse 28

in a multitude of people that the people are righteous is the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He.
but...in lack of people When they do not cleave to Him.
the ruin of His Princedom It is the absence of His Princedom. So to speak, He gives of His honor to others.

Verse 29

selects folly Heb. מרים, he separates it for his share.

Verse 30

A healing heart is the life of the flesh A heart of flesh, which heals the evil and passes over his retaliations, is the life of the creatures of the Holy One, blessed be He, who are flesh and blood.
but anger is the rot of the bones A man who is often angry is the rot of everyone’s bones.

Verse 31

Verse 32

but a righteous man is confident in his death When he dies, he is confident that he will come to Paradise.

Verse 33

Wisdom rests in the heart of an understanding man Heb. תנוח, it dwells and rests tranquilly; an expression of rest and tranquility.
but in the midst of the fools it is known The little wisdom that is in his heart calls out. This parallels the Talmudic maxim (Baba Mezia 85b): “A coin in a bottle makes a sound of kish kish.”

Verse 34

Charity will elevate a nation Israel.
but the kindness of the kingdoms is sin They are the heathens, who rob one to give another.

Verse 35

but his wrath will be upon a shameful servant.

Chapter 15

Verse 1

Verse 2

Verse 3

Verse 4

but if there is perverseness in it, it causes destruction by wind When one is perverse with his tongue, it will ultimately bring upon him destruction that comes from the east wind, which is prepared to mete out retribution upon the wicked, as it is stated (Ex. 14:21): "with a strong east wind"; (Jer. 18: 17): "Like an east wind I will scatter them"; and (Ps. 48:8): "With an east wind, You break the ships of Tarshish."

Verse 5

Verse 6

The house of a righteous man possesses great strength The Temple that David the Righteous built is a great strength and a mighty tower for Israel.
but it becomes ruined with the bringing of the wicked man But with the bringing of the idols that Manasseh brought into it, it was ruined.

Verse 7

The lips of the wise crown knowledge יזרו, they crown knowledge, as in (Ex. 25: "a gold crown (זר)."
is not so It is not true gold.

Verse 8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination of the Lord Balak and Balaam.
but the prayer of the upright This is Moses.

Verse 9

Verse 10

Harsh discipline will come to him who forsakes the way Harsh suffering is ready for him who transgresses the way of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Verse 11

The grave and Destruction are opposite the Lord It is revealed to Him all that are therein.
surely people’s hearts This is an inference from a major to a minor.

Verse 12

Verse 13

A merry heart makes a cheerful face If you cheer up the heart of the Holy One, blessed be He, by following His ways, He will show you a cheerful face to do your will, but if you sadden Him, He will show you a breaking spirit, as it is stated (Gen. 6:6f): “And He became saddened to His heart. And the Lord said, ‘I will erase man, etc.’” a breaking spirit (Talant in Old French, explained in Ecc. 1:6) a spirit of fury.

Verse 14

Verse 15

All the days of a poor man are wretched Even Sabbaths and festivals, as Samuel said. A change of diet is the beginning of intestinal disorders.
but he who has a cheerful heart One whose heart is cheerful with his wealth.
always has a feast All his years seem to him like days of feasting to teach you that a person should be happy with his lot (Avoth 4:1). And our Sages expounded [on this] in the chapter entitled Chelek (Sanh. 100b, 101a).

Verse 16

Better a little with the fear of the Lord, than a great treasury and turmoil with it The voice of people shouting that the treasury was made from robbery and violence, as in (Amos 3:9): “And see great confusions within it and people being oppressed in its midst.”

Verse 17

than a fattened ox To feed him fat meat and to show him an angry countenance. than a fattened ox אבוס. An ox into whose mouth they stuff the food against his will, in order to fatten him. Likewise (I Kings 5:3): “fatted (אבוסים) fowl.” And it can be explained allegorically as referring to the handful—the little bit offered up by the poor—[being better] than an ox for a sin-offering offered up by a wicked man. Another explanation: Better a repast of herbs To give a poor man. where there is love To show him a friendly countenance.

Verse 18

A man of wrath stirs up quarrel A man who has no control over his anger, to be slow to anger, stirs up quarrels.
but he who is slow to anger Who does not hasten to take revenge and to quarrel.
abates strife It ends and abates by itself.

Verse 19

The way of a lazy man is like a hedge of thorns In his eyes, it appears as though the roads are fenced before him with a fence of thorns.
like a hedge of Heb. כמשכת. A fence, as in (Isa. 5:5): "I will remove its hedge (משוכתו)."
thorns Heb. חדק, thorns. but the path of the upright is even סלולה, trodden and cleared. The Midrash Aggadah (Pesikta d'Rav Kahana 11a) states: The way of Esau is like a thorn entangled in a fleece of wool. If you extract it from here, it catches on here. Likewise, no one can extricate himself from his false accusations without money.

Verse 20

A wise son makes his father happy, but a foolish person despises his mother He causes people to despise his mother.

Verse 21

Folly is joy It is joy for the one devoid of sense.

Verse 22

Plans are foiled for lack of counsel Without counsel, the plan will not be established.

Verse 23

A man has joy with the response of his mouth According to its apparent meaning: Through a soft answer and gentle speech, people love him. Our Sages expounded it as referring to those who memorize the Torah; if they utter an answer with their mouth, they will remember it and rejoice with it.
and how good is a word in time! They ask concerning the laws of Passover and the laws of Sukkoth in their season.

Verse 24

The path of life is above the intelligent person As in (Isa. 6:2): "Seraphim stood above for Him." Before the wise man, the path of life is arrayed and prepared.

Verse 25

Verse 26

Verse 27

troubles his own house he who is greedy of gain.
but he who hates gifts will live Since he hates gifts, he surely hates robbery.

Verse 28

The heart of a righteous man thinks to answer He will think and understand what to answer before replying.

Verse 29

Verse 30

The light of the eyes in Torah.
makes the heart happy when they ask him something, and he knows what to answer. According to its simple meaning, it is to be interpreted according to its apparent meaning: A thing that is a delight to the sight of the eyes makes the heart happy and cleanses the sadness of the heart, such as a vegetable garden and flowing rivers.

Verse 31

Verse 32

Verse 33

and before honor there is humility Humility causes honor to come.

Chapter 16

Verse 1

The preparations of the heart are man’s He arranges his counsel and his words in his heart.
but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord When he comes to answer, the Holy One, blessed be He, causes him to stumble with his words—or if he merits, He prepares a good reply for him.

Verse 2

but the Lord counts the spirits and counts the hearts; who is the good one, and who is the bad one.

Verse 3

Commit your affairs to the Lord גל. Roll and cast your necessities upon Him, and your plans will be established. Another explanation: Commit your affairs to the Lord pray to Him for all your necessities.
will be established Will be founded and will endure.

Verse 4

The Lord made everything for His praise Heb. למענהו. He made everything for His praise, as in (Ps. 147:7): “Praise (ענו) the Lord with thanksgiving.” Another explanation: To testify concerning Him. That is to say that His work testifies concerning Him, about His mighty acts. Both are in the Aggadah of Psalms (Midrash Tehillim 19:1).
even the wicked man He made, to leave him for the day of evil. All this is for His praise.

Verse 5

hand to hand he will not go unpunished From hand to hand the punishment for his haughtiness will come to him.

Verse 6

and through fear of the Lord turn away from evil Through the fear of the Lord turn away from evil.

Verse 7

When the Lord accepts a person’s ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him He will appease [them] for him that they should make peace with him.

Verse 8

Verse 9

A man’s heart plans his way to walk on the straight way.
but the Lord prepares his step as we learned: He who comes to purify himself is granted assistance.

Verse 10

There is magic on a king’s lips On the lips of a wise man sitting in judgment.

Verse 11

The balance and scales of justice are the Lord’s etc. to requite a person according to his deed. משפט is (justice in French, in German Gerechtigkeit, and so in Isaiah 7,) the retribution for a person’s sins with a balance and scales.
all the weights in the bag Just as among the weights in the bag, there are large weights and small ones, so is everything according to a person’s deeds.

Verse 12

It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness It is an abominable thing for judges, and it is not proper for them to commit wickedness.

Verse 13

Verse 14

The king’s wrath is like messengers of death, like messengers of death [but not angels of death].
will pacify it Will placate it.

Verse 15

In the light of the King’s countenance is life The one to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, shows a bright countenance—it is life to him. Therefore, a person must straighten his way before Him.

and His delight is like a cloud of the late rain Whoever is accepted by Him—His delight is beneficial to him like the cloud that brings the rain.

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

It is better to be of humble spirit It is better to join the lowly and to be of humble spirit with them than to divide spoils with the haughty.

Verse 20

He who considers a matter One who sets his heart to consider his matters, to weigh his ways, will find good.
and he who trusts in the Lord is fortunate When he weighs his ways and sees that a commandment involves danger or monetary loss, but he trusts in the Holy One, blessed be He, and [still] does that good deed.
is fortunate They are his fortunes.

Verse 21

The wise-hearted shall be called understanding He who learned wisdom from his teacher.
shall be called understanding. Ultimately, he will be understanding in matters and keen in his wisdom, and they will call him understanding.
and the sweetness of speech increases learning When a person explains his words to a pupil and makes his words sweet with reasons, he increases learning.

Verse 22

Intelligence is a fountain of life to one who has it lit. a fountain of life is the intelligence of its possessor. And this is the interpretation of the verse: The intelligence of the one who has it is a fountain of life to him.
but the chastisement of the fools is folly But the chastisement of the fools comes to them because of folly. And this is the apparent meaning: Folly is chastisement to the fools.

Verse 23

The heart of a wise man gives his mouth intelligence His heart teaches his mouth to speak lucidly.

Verse 24

a honeycomb Heb. צוף דבש, sweet as honey (bresche in O.F.).
Pleasant words Words of Torah.

Verse 25

There is a way that is straight in a man’s view.

Verse 26

labors for him It labors for his needs.
when his mouth forces him When his mouth forces him and demands food, then his labor stands up for him, for he eats what he has already worked for.

Verse 27

digs up evil In his heart, he plots evil.
and on his lips is a kind of searing fire The evil burns on his lips until he expresses it with his mouth and executes it.
a kind of searing fire Heb. צרבת burning, as in (Ezek. 21:3): “And all faces shall be scorched (ונצרבו) by it.”

Verse 28

and a grumbler alienates the Lord And through his grumbling, he alienates the Lord of the world from himself.

Verse 29

Verse 30

He winks his eyes Heb. עצה, an expression of winking, and so (Ps. 32:8): “I will wink (אִיעצה) to you my eye.”
bringing evil to pass כלה, as in (Esther 7:7) “that the evil was determined (כלתה) against him by the king.” He causes evil to come to the world.

Verse 31

it will be found in the way of righteousness Through righteousness, they live long.

Verse 32

and one who rules over his spirit He conquers his evil inclination.

Verse 33

The lot is cast in the lap By himself, a person cast lots.
but all his judgment to choose for each one his share.

Chapter 17

Verse 1

Better a piece of dry bread and tranquility with it It would have been better for the Holy One, blessed be He, to destroy His Temple and His city, for He would enjoy tranquility from the sins of Israel.
than a house full of sacrifices of strife For they were sacrificing sacrifices of strife in his Temple.

Verse 2

An intelligent slave, etc. Because Nebuchadnezzar was wise enough to take three steps in honor of the Holy One, blessed be He, he achieved greatness and ruled over Israel, who performed disgraceful deeds, and he divided their inheritance before their eyes. Another explanation: A righteous proselyte is better than a wicked person who was home born, and in the future, he will share the spoils and the inheritance among the children of Israel, as it is said (Ezek. 47:23): "And it shall be, in whatever tribe the stranger will live, etc."

Verse 3

A refining pot is for silver A vessel in which they refine silver and which is made from burnt ash on earthenware is called מצרף, a refining pot.
and a furnace is for gold A vessel in which gold is refined, a vessel in which gold is purified, like a broken pot, is called כור, a furnace.
A refining pot is for silver, and a furnace is for gold The refining pot is made to refine silver for its work, and so is the furnace to purify the gold, but [peoples'] hearts—the Holy One, blessed be He, purifies them and tests them and knows their thoughts.

Verse 4

An evildoer A wicked man.
hearkens to a language of violence and lies He accepts slander and false testimony.
lends an ear Heb. מזין like מאזין He who lies lends an ear to destructive speech.

Verse 5

Verse 6

the crown of the aged when they see their children's children going on the good way.
and the glory of the children is their fathers When their fathers are righteous, it is glory for the children.

Verse 7

Proud words Heb. שפת יתר, words of pride.
surely not lying speech a generous one And surely, lying speech does not befit a generous one.

Verse 8

a precious stone When a person comes before the Holy One, blessed be He, and placates Him with words and returns to Him, it is as a precious stone and as pearls in His eyes.
wherever he turns, he prospers In whatever he asks of Him, He makes him prosper.

Verse 9

He who conceals transgression seeks love If one man sins against another, and the latter conceals it for him, does not remind him of his sin, and does not show him an angry face, he causes him to love him.
but he who harps on a matter Who bears a grudge and reminds him, "You did such and such a thing to me." Immediately...
alienates the Lord Then he alienates the Lord of the world.

Verse 10

The humility caused by the rebuke of an understanding person Heb. תחת. The accent in the word תחת is above on the "tav," unlike the rest of the Scriptures. Therefore, I say that it is a noun, like תחת and its explanation is as follows. The humility caused by a rebuke is recognizable in an understanding person more than one hundred blows that they strike the fool.

Verse 11

He who is only rebellious seeks evil One whose every word is rebelliousness and stubbornness constantly seeks evil.

Verse 12

May a bereaving bear encounter a person It is better for a person that a bereaving bear encounter him rather than one of the foolish heathens, who entice him to idolatry.

Verse 13

Verse 14

The beginning of strife is like letting out water Whoever commences a quarrel is like one who opens a hole in the stone walls of a water canal, and the water goes out through it, and the hole becomes progressively wider; so does the quarrel constantly escalate.
and before you are exposed Before your shame is exposed, abandon the quarrel.

Verse 15

Verse 16

Why is there a price in the fool's hand to buy wisdom To learn the Torah.
when the heart is not here In his heart, he has no intention of fulfilling it, and he learns only to gain a reputation.

Verse 17

At all times, love a friend You should always love friends, i.e., to acquire people who love you.
for he is born a brother for adversity At the time of adversity, the friend will be born to you as a brother, to help you and to participate in your adversity.

Verse 18

A person without sense clasps hands [This refers to] surety of money. Another explanation: He clasps with the wicked to go in their ways, while he is already a guarantor for his friend. He already accepted surety for the Holy One, blessed be He, to keep His commandments.

Verse 19

He who delights in transgression to sin against his friend.
delights in quarrels To quarrel and strive.
he who speaks haughtily lit. he who raises his opening, speaks with haughtiness, as in (Micah 7:5) “guard the openings of your mouth.”

Verse 20

Verse 21

Verse 22

A happy heart enhances one’s brilliance Heb. גהה. When a person is satisfied with his lot, his countenance shines.

Verse 23

He will take a bribe from a wicked man’s bosom The Holy One, blessed be He, accepts words of humility and appeasement from the bosom of the wicked; i.e., in secret, between Him and them.
to pervert the roads of justice To overturn his verdict from evil to good.

Verse 24

Wisdom is directly in front of an understanding man The wisdom is directly in front of an understanding man.
but the eyes of a fool are at the end of the earth saying, “Wisdom is inaccessible to me [lit. The wisdom is not found before me] because it is far from me. How will I be able to learn the Order Nezikin, which consists of thirty chapters; Tractate Kelim, consisting of thirty chapters; Tractate Shabbath, consisting of twenty-four chapters?” But, for the wise man, it is an easy matter: “Today I learn two chapters and tomorrow two chapters.” And he says, “This is what those who preceded me from time immemorial did.”

Verse 25

A foolish son causes anger to his father [A foolish son] like Jeroboam causes anger to the Holy One, blessed be He.
and bitterness to her who bore him To the people of Israel, whom he caused to sin.

Verse 26

To punish also the righteous man is not good The Holy One, blessed be He, did not decide to obliterate the name of Israel from upon the earth, as it was not good in his sight to punish all of them.
to strike the generous who possess uprightness To strike the good people among them, who were generous and possessing uprightness, as it is said

(I Kings 19:18): “And I will leave over in Israel seven thousand—all the knees that did not kneel to the Baal.”
the generous who possess uprightness Heb. נדיבים עלי ישר, an analogy of what is stated elsewhere (Isa. 32:8): “But the generous person plans generous deeds, and he, because of generous deeds, shall stand.” We find “a generous man because of generous deeds.”

Verse 27

keeps back his words He who has knowledge does not talk excessively.
he whose breath is dear (Whose words are dear; Salonica ed.) He who keeps back his words is a man of understanding.

Chapter 18

Verse 1

He who is separated seeks lust He who is separated from the Holy One, blessed be He, not keeping His precepts, pursues the lust of his heart and his evil inclination, and finally... in all sound wisdom, he is exposed Among the wise, his disgrace will be revealed. Our Sages expounded this as referring to Lot, who separated from Abraham because of the lust of his heart, as it is stated (Gen. 13:11): “And Lot chose for himself the entire plain of the Jordan, etc.” This whole verse is stated concerning adultery. His end was that his shame was exposed in the synagogues and in the study halls, [when people read] (Deut. 23:4): “Neither an Ammonite nor a Moabite may enter [the congregation of the Lord].”

Verse 2

but in revealing his heart But in the revelation of his heart. He wishes to reveal what is in his heart.

Verse 3

and with disdain disgrace comes. He who chooses disdain and adultery—it is a disgrace for him.

Verse 4

the wellspring of wisdom is like a flowing stream and like deep water.
The words of a man’s mouth Heb. אישׁ. Every instance of אישׁ in Scripture is an expression of a mighty man, one who is great in might.

Verse 5

It is not good to be partial to the wicked As our Sages explained: It is not good for the wicked, that they are favored in this world and are requited in the next world.
to subvert the righteous in judgment It is good for the righteous that the scale is weighed down for them to make them guilty in this world, where they are requited during their lifetime, and they merit the world to come. Its simple meaning, however, is according to its apparent meaning.

Verse 6

The lips of a fool will enter a quarrel All his matters come about with an expression of quarreling.
and his mouth calls out for blows He calls pains to come upon himself.

Verse 7

Verse 8

The words of a grumbler are like blows Heb. כמתלהמים.

Verse 9

Even one who is slack in his work If he is a Torah scholar who separated himself from the Torah.
to the destroyer To Satan.

Verse 10

The name of the Lord is a tower of strength; the righteous runs into it and is strengthened Heb. ונשגב.

Verse 11

and like a strong wall his wealth is to him in his chambers. Since the house is paved with a floor of stones that cover the earth, it is called אבן משכית, a covering stone.

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

A man’s spirit The spirit of a גבר, who is a mighty man, does not take worry to heart, but accepts with joy and love whatever befalls him.
will sustain his illness He does not lose his strength.

Verse 15

Verse 16

A man’s gift will make room [This is to be understood] according to its simple meaning, but, according to its midrashic interpretation, it deals with those who give (sic) charity, which widens his share in the future world, as well as during his lifetime, and it will lead him before the great, who say that he is esteemed.

Verse 17

Verse 18

and it separates contentious people Heb. עצומים, these are the litigants, as in (Isa. 41: 21): "'present your strong points (עצמותיכם).'" As their pleas are strong, they are called עצומים, either an expression of strength or an expression of closing, as in (ibid. 33:15) "and closes (עצם) his eyes."

Verse 19

A rebellious brother...of a strong city There is a brother who rebels against his brother and loses a strong city, e.g. Lot against Abraham and Esau against Jacob.
and the quarrels are like the bolt of a castle The quarrel between them separates them forever, like a bolt with which they lock the gates of a castle, so that no one should enter it.

Verse 20

Verse 21

and those who love it will eat its produce He who loves his tongue and accustoms it to [speaking words of] Torah, partakes of its reward in this world.

Verse 22

He who has found a wife has found good He who has found the Torah; and according to its apparent meaning, a good wife.
and has obtained favor And has obtained. This is its simple meaning. Another explanation: A man who found a wife and found good, has obtained favor. That man obtains favor from the Holy One, blessed be He. [This is in the name of] Rabbi Joseph Kara.

Verse 23

A poor man speaks with supplications This one is accustomed to [speak] in this manner, and that one is accustomed to [speak] in that manner. He teaches you a rule of conduct; that although the rich man answers with impudence, the poor man should speak with supplications, and so is the matter of a teacher to a pupil.

Verse 24

A man acquires friends with whom to associate A man who acquires friends for himself [will find] that the day will arrive when he will need them, and they will befriend him. Now, if you ask, "What of it?" there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother, for he will befriend him more than his kin and his brothers.

Chapter 19

Verse 1

Verse 2

It is also not good that a soul be without knowledge It is not good for a person to be without Torah.
and he who hastens with his feet sins The sinner treads and tramples the sins with his heels and says, "This is of minor import; I will transgress it." And our Sages explained: It is also...without knowledge, as referring to one who compels his wife to copulate with him against her will.
and he who hastens with his feet sins This refers to one who performs the sex act and repeats it. Another explanation: One who walks on grass on the Sabbath.

Verse 3

A man's folly perverts his way Harm comes upon him because of his sin, because his folly perverts his way and he commits sins for which he is punished; and when the trouble befalls him, his heart is wroth with the Holy One, blessed be He, and he questions the Divine standard of justice, e.g. Joseph's brothers, who said (Gen. 42:28): "What is this that God has done to us?"

Verse 4

Wealth adds many friends Heb. רעים רבים, many lovers. And it can be interpreted as concerning one who learned Torah.

Verse 5

Verse 6

The great will beg the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend All become friends to a man who gives gifts. This may be interpreted as referring to those who give charity, and it may also be interpreted as referring to those who disseminate the Torah.

Verse 7

All the kinsmen of a poor man lit. the brothers, the kinsmen.
surely his friends distance themselves Surely his friends, his companions, and his lovers.
he pursues statements that are fit for him He says, "So-and-so and so-and-so are my relatives. So-and-so and so-and-so are my friends." And all are words of futility. This can be interpreted as concerning one who is poor in Torah and in good deeds.
he pursues statements which are futile He seeks to promulgate the halachah, but it is not in his possession. The midrash interprets it as concerning Joseph, who spread slander about his brothers. He would say to his father that they were suspected of [eating] limbs from a living animal. Therefore, they hated him, and he was called a poor man because he would spread false rumors about them and look for statements that were not true (לא המה). We read לו, "to him," for he would pursue statements for his own benefit, and in Joseph's matter, they were his, because his slander returned upon him. He would say that they ate limbs from a living animal, but Scripture testifies about them that even in the time of sin, they would slaughter a kid, as it is said: (Gen. 37:31) "and they slaughtered a kid." He would say that they degraded the sons of the maidservants. Therefore, Joseph was sold as a slave. He would say that they gazed upon the women of the land. Said the Holy One, blessed be He,

“By your life, I will incite a bear upon you.” Therefore, (ibid. 39:7) “his master’s wife lifted, etc.” [This appears] in Genesis Rabbah [see 84:7].

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

Pleasure does not befit a fool, much less a slave It is derived by an a fortiori conclusion that it does not befit a slave to rule over princes.

Verse 11

It is good sense for a man to be slow to anger Heb. האריך, like להאריך, to be slow. If he did so, it is good sense for him.
and it is his glory that he pass over his retaliations.

Verse 12

The King’s fury is like a lion’s roar [The fury of] the Holy One, blessed be He.

Verse 13

a constant dripping lit. a driving drip. [As] the dripping of the rain that falls in the house disturbs and drives out the inhabitants of the house, so are the quarrels of a bad wife.

Verse 14

Verse 15

Laziness causes one to fall into a deep sleep Laziness causes one to fall asleep. This is the figure, but the allegory is that it concerns one who neglects his studies; it will ultimately come about that people will ask him words of wisdom, and he will be sound asleep.
and a deceitful soul shall suffer hunger He will ultimately become poor. Similarly, one who is deceitful in his studies, making his Torah into “bundles,” will ultimately forget.

Verse 16

He who keeps a commandment keeps his soul; he who despises his ways will die He does not take heed to weigh them.

Verse 17

He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him his reward When he becomes ill and is close to death, his charity defends him before the Divine standard of justice, saying, “The poor man’s soul was struggling to leave him because of hunger, and this one sustained it. I, too, will return his soul to him.”

Verse 18

Chastise your son for there is hope, but do not set your heart on his destruction Do not deal him a lethal blow.

Verse 19

A hot-tempered man incurs punishment, etc. But if you pass over your anger and save your enemy if you see harm coming to him, you will yet increase your days and have much goodness.

Verse 20

Verse 21

Verse 22

The attraction to a man is his kindness The main reason why people are attracted to a person is because of his kindness.
and a poor man is better than a liar And if he is a liar, who promises but does not perform, a poor man is better than he.

Verse 23

and he will rest satisfied He who fears the Lord will rest, satisfied that he will not be visited by any evil.

Verse 24

A lazy man hid his hand in a kettle Heb. בצלחת, in a hot kettle, in which, when removed from the fire and emptied, one may warm his hand. Similar to it in Chronicles (II 35:13): "they cooked in pots, in cauldrons, and in kettles (בצלחות)," In the name of Rabbi Isaac HaLevi I heard that בצלחת is derived from the expression of the Aramaic translation of וּבקע "and he split," which is וצלח. At the time of the cold and the frost, since the cold and the frost crack and split the hands. [Hence, we render: A lazy man hid his hand in winter.] But I heard that is a rend of a cloak called fenditura [in Italian, in German Riss, Spalt, Schlitz], i.e., he hides it in his bosom.

Verse 25

Beat a scorner, and a simple man will gain cunning Through the plagues visited upon Pharaoh and the war with Amalek, Jethro gained cunning and converted.

Verse 26

A son who causes shame and disgrace robs his father, puts his mother to flight Heb. וּבריח, puts his mother to flight.
A son who causes shame and disgrace Whose ways are disgraceful. Since Sarah saw the son of the Egyptian maidservant making sport with idolatry and adultery, he caused his mother to be sent away, "and the matter displeased Abraham" (Gen. 21:11).

Verse 27

My son, cease to stray, etc. This is an elliptical verse, and this is its explanation: My son, cease to stray from words of knowledge in order to hear discipline.
cease to stray Heb. לשגות, like מלשגות, from straying. Likewise, (Num. 9:13): "and refrains (וחדל) from performing (לעשות) the Passover service." Also, (Gen. 41:49): "they stopped counting (לספר)."

Verse 28

A godless witness testifies judgment He testifies against a man [with] the rhetoric of the judgments of tortures and death.
but violence will devour the mouth of the wicked The violence will swallow him up.

Verse 29

are prepared for the scorners The Holy One, blessed be He, prepared punishments of zaraath for this scorner who slanders.

Chapter 20

Verse 1

Verse 2

Fear of a king is like a lion's roar; he who provokes him Who angers him.

Verse 3

It is honor for a man to refrain from quarreling To rest from quarrel.
and every fool who does not refrain from quarreling—his disgrace will be exposed.

Verse 4

Because of the winter, a lazy man does not plow Because of the cold, a lazy man sits and does no work, neither does he engage in Torah.

Verse 5

Counsel in man's heart is like deep water A halachah in a wise man's heart is sealed.
but a man of understanding will draw it out An understanding pupil comes and draws it out of his innards.

Verse 6

Many people call upon the man who promises them kindness There are many people who rely on their friends who promise them kindness, and they call them at the time of their straits.
but who can find a trustworthy man? who promises and keeps his promise.
who promises them kindness Heb. איש חסדו, lit. a man of his kindness, who promises him to do kindness.

Verse 7

Verse 8

A king sits upon a throne of judgment This may be explained as referring to the Holy One, blessed be He, or it may be explained as referring to the true judges.

Verse 9

Verse 10

Verse 11

Verse 12

The hearing ear and the seeing eye, etc. They are His handiwork, and He desires an ear that hears reproof and an eye that sees what will develop.

Verse 13

lest you become poor Heb. תורש you become poor (רש).

Verse 14

"It is bad, it is bad," says the buyer If one acquires Torah through poverty and the pains of hunger, he says, "Woe is to me for this evil and for this trouble," but when he goes away full of wisdom... then he boasts about the pain he suffered.
but when he goes away Heb. ואזל, but when he goes away.

Verse 15

Verse 16

Verse 17

Bread of falsehood is sweet to a man Adultery with a married woman.
but afterwards his mouth will be filled with gravel Heb. חצץ, fine pebbles. Similarly, (Lam. 3:16): "And He has made my teeth grind on gravel (בחצץ)."

Verse 18

Plans with counsel will be established, and with strategies wage war If you come to wage war against Satan, come with strategies of repentance, prayer and fasting.

Verse 19

with one who divulges secrets, one who gossips, or with one who entices with his lips who speaks smoothly to seduce you and entice you.

Verse 20

If one curses...his lamp will flicker in the blackest darkness When the darkness becomes blacker and blacker—when evil befalls him.

Verse 21

An inheritance may be acquired hastily in the beginning Which one hastened to take hurriedly, e.g. the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, who hastened to take their share on the other side of the Jordan, and they spoke hastily, as it is said (Num. 32:16): "We want to build sheepfolds for our cattle here and cities for our children." They made the main thing of secondary import, for they placed their flocks before their children.
but its end will not be blessed For they were exiled many years before the rest of the tribes, as is explained in Seder Olam (ch. 22), and in the Midrash of Rabbi Tanhuma (see Mattoth 7): "In the second year of Ahaz, the Lord aroused the desire of the king of Assyria, etc. (I Chron. 5:26)," but the rest of the tribes were exiled in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which is the ninth year of Hoshea the son of Elah.

Verse 22

Verse 23

Verse 24

Verse 25

When a man is trapped, he impairs his sanctity Heb. יִלָּע. When a man stumbles and is trapped in sins, he impairs his sanctity, as in (Obadiah verse 16) "and they shall drink and be stunned (וְלָעוּ)."
and he must seek vows Man must seek sacrifices to vow and to bring and to beg for his life.

Verse 26

scatters the wicked Pharaoh and his host.
The Wise King The Holy One, blessed be He.
and turns the wheel over them The wheel of their traits He turned over them. "And drove it heavily (Ex. 14:25)," corresponding to (ibid. 8: 11) "and he made his heart heavy."

Verse 27

Man's soul is the Lord's lamp The soul in his midst testifies concerning him in judgment.

Verse 28

Verse 29

The glory of young men is their strength Just as the glory of young men is their strength, so is the beauty of elders their hoary head.

Verse 30

Contusions and wounds come for outpouring in evil Our Sages expounded: Whoever “pours himself” out into sinful things, will ultimately come to wounds and contusions.
and plagues in the innermost parts This is dropsy.

Chapter 21

Verse 1

Verse 2

Man’s every way is straight in his own eyes, but the Lord counts Heb. וּתכֵן.

Verse 3

Verse 4

Haughty eyes A haughty spirit.
and unlimited lust The desire to satisfy the lusts of his heart; that is the tillage of the wicked. Their “plowing” and their thoughts is their sin.

Verse 5

The plans of a diligent man Heb. חָרוּץ, an honest man who walks in truth and according to the established judgment.
lead only to advantage They come to prosperity and profit.
whereas every hasty one One who forces the time.

Verse 6

Gathering treasures to increase wealth.
with a lying tongue is like a driven vapor, etc. They are snares of death (seekers of death) for him.

Verse 7

The plunder of the wicked frightens them Heb. יגורם, [like] יגור אותם.

Verse 8

A man’s way is changeable and he is strange A man who is strange, turning away from the commandment—his way is changeable.

Verse 9

and the house of a friend That he enters his friend’s house to converse with his wife. And the Midrash Aggadah states: He prophesied that the Shechinah would ultimately leave Israel, who is like a quarrelsome wife.
and the house of a friend A house in which they associate friends with the Holy One, blessed be He; for example, the image that Manasseh erected in the Temple of the Lord.

Verse 10

Verse 11

When a scorner is punished, a fool gains wisdom Through the chastisements of scorners, fools gain wisdom and return [to God] in repentance.

Verse 12

The Righteous One considers The Righteous One of the world sets His heart to destroy the house of the wicked, e.g. the remembrance of Amalek.

Verse 13

Verse 14

A gift in secret Charity.
and a bribe in the pocket This too refers to charity. It will appease even strong wrath.

Verse 15

It is a joy for a righteous man to do judgment It is a joy for the Holy One, blessed be He, to inflict judgment upon the righteous in order to bestow upon them the life of the world to come, for the Holy One, blessed be He, brings pains upon them in order that they merit the world to come. In this manner, it is expounded in Midrash Psalms (3:1).
and a ruin It is [a ruin] for those who commit violence Because they do not put their hearts to repent and the pains do not avail them, but they suffer to no avail.

Verse 16

A man who strays from the way of understanding From the Torah.
in the congregation of the shades in the congregation of Gehinnom.

Verse 17

shall be a poor man He who loves the joy of always banqueting.

Verse 18

A wicked man shall be ransom for a righteous man, and a treacherous one instead of the upright A righteous man is rescued, and a wicked man comes in his stead (above 11:8), such as Mordecai and Haman.

Verse 19

It is better to dwell in a desert land This too was stated regarding the withdrawal of the Shechinah.

Verse 20

but man’s foolishness Heb. וכסיל אדם foolishness of a man.

Verse 21

Verse 22

A wise man ascended to a city of mighty men This refers to Moses, our teacher, who went up among the angels, who are mighty in strength. (and brought down, etc. The Torah.)

Verse 23

Verse 24

haughty Heb. יהיר, one who is haughty; he will ultimately become a scorner, for he does not care to hear reproof.

Verse 25

Verse 26

but the righteous gives all the necessities of his house, for the Holy One, blessed be He, prepares them for him.

Verse 27

how much more if he brings it with plans of wickedness! How much more if he brings it to be wicked and with evil counsel, such as the sacrifices of Balaam and Balak, who brought them only to curse Israel.

Verse 28

but an obedient man who obeys what is written in the Torah: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
forever Always.

Verse 29

A wicked man shows his brazenness in his anger A wicked man shows his brazenness at the time of his anger.
in his anger Heb. בפניו, an expression of anger.

Verse 30

There is neither wisdom, etc. No wise or understanding man is of any importance against the Lord. Wherever there is a desecration of the Name, we do not pay regard to a teacher.

Chapter 22

Verse 1

A name is chosen A good name above great wealth.
good favor over silver and gold Good favor is chosen.

Verse 2

the Lord is the Maker of them all When the poor man says to the rich man, “Sustain me,” and he answers him harshly, the Holy One, blessed be He, makes them new: this one poor and this one rich.

Verse 3

A cunning man saw harm The punishment for a sin, and hid, not committing the sin.

Verse 4

In the wake of humility Because of humility, fear of the Lord comes.
Another explanation: Humility is the main attribute, and fear is secondary to it and a “heel” to it, a mat for its feet.

Verse 5

Troops [and] snares Heb. צנים, as in (Num. 33:55) “troops (לצנינים) in your sides”; (Ezek. 23: 24) “And they will come upon you, a band (הצן),” an expression of bands and brigands.
Troops and snares are hidden on the ways of the one who perverts his ways; i.e., torments are prepared for him.
he who preserves his soul will distance himself from them He who is upright in his deeds will be saved from them.

Verse 6

Train a child According to what you teach a child and train him in matters, either for good or bad, even when he grows old, he will not turn away from it.

Verse 7

A rich man will rule over the poor An ignoramus always needs a Torah scholar.

Verse 8

He who sows injustice will reap violence According to his sowing will be his reaping; according to his deed will be the reception of his reward.
and the rod of his wrath will fail The rod of his ear of grain will fail more and more [interpreting עברתו as עבור, grain]. Some say: The rod of his wrath with which he rules over people will become progressively lessened because he impairs his ability.

Verse 9

Verse 10

Banish a scorner The evil inclination.

Verse 11

He who loves one pure of heart with charm on his lips One whose lips have grace.
the King is his friend The Holy One, blessed be He, loves him and endears him.

Verse 12

Verse 13

The lazy man says, “There is a lion outside...” How will I go out to learn Torah?

Verse 14

The mouth of strange women is [like] a deep pit An idolatress.
the one abhorred by the Lord Heb. זעוּם. He whom the Holy One, blessed be He, hates, falls and stumbles upon her.
the one abhorred rebuked from before Him.

Verse 15

Verse 16

He who exploits a poor man to increase for himself money.
will give to a rich man He will ultimately give his money to the rich pagan kings, and it will be only to want.

Verse 17

Incline your ear and hearken to the words of the wise to learn the Torah from a sage of any stature.
and put your heart to my knowledge But if your teacher is wicked, do not learn from his deeds.

Verse 18

for it is pleasant It will be [pleasant] for you at a later time if you preserve them and hide them in your innards lest you forget them. Now when will they be preserved in your heart? When they are established on your lips, when you utter them with your mouth.

Verse 19

That your trust shall be in the Lord, I have made known to you I make known to you that you should trust in the Lord and engage in the Torah, and you shall not say, “How will I be idle from my work, and how will I earn a livelihood?”

Verse 20

Have I not written to you thirds The Torah, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa.

Verse 21

to make known to you the certainty I wrote thirds for you in order that you should understand from them the certainty of the true words.
to respond with words of truth to those who send you To those who ask you for instruction.

Verse 22

Do not rob a poor man Do not rob him because you see that he is poor and has no strength to resist you.

Verse 23

For the Lord will plead their cause and rob Heb. וקבע. And will rob the life.
those who rob them Heb. קבעים, those who rob them; in Aramaic קביעה means robbery. In tractate Rosh Hashanah (26b): A certain man came before him and said to him, "So-and-so robbed me (קבעו)" etc.

Verse 24

Do not befriend Heb. תתרע, do not befriend, an expression of friendship (רעות)

Verse 25

lest you learn Heb. תאלף.

Verse 26

Do not be one of those who give their hands, who stand surety for debts Loans, as in (Deut. 24: 10), "When you lend you fellow [Jew] any item."

Verse 27

Verse 28

Do not remove an ancient boundary Do not turn away from the custom of your forefathers. Our Sages of blessed memory said: If one places a basket under a vine at the time of vintage so that the fallen grapes should fall into it, concerning this was stated: "Do not remove an ancient boundary, etc." remove Heb. תסג, as in (Ps. 129:5) "and shall draw backwards (ויסגו)."

Chapter 23

Verse 1

If you sit down to dine Heb. ללחום, to eat.
you should understand well Give thought to know who he is, whether he is stingy or generous.

Verse 2

and you shall put a knife into your jaw Heb. בלועך, into your jaw. If you see that he is stingy, do not eat of his [food].
if you are a man with a hearty appetite If you are a glutton and long to eat, it is better that you thrust a knife between your teeth. Our Sages expounded this as referring to a disciple sitting before his teacher. If he knows that his teacher will give him an answer for everything he asks, let him investigate the subtle points and ask concerning his tradition, but if not, let him keep his peace.

Verse 3

Do not desire his delicacies but leave him and go [to study] before a competent teacher, and do not embarrass him with questions, since he does not know what to answer.

Verse 4

Do not weary yourself to grow rich To make your learning into bundles because you will ultimately forget it.

Verse 5

Should you blink your eyes at it The moment you blink your eyes to close them, that study will no longer be found with you.
התעיף, like “and you shall fold” (Ex. 26:9), which Onkelos renders: ותעיף.

Verse 6

Verse 7

for it is as though it poured gall שער. This שער is vowelized half with a “patach” and half with a “kamatz,” and the accent is at the end of the word; therefore, it is a verb and not a noun; for were it a noun, it would be [vowelized completely with] a “pattah” and the accent would be at the beginning of the word, like every שער in Scriptures. Its meaning is that it as though this food poured gall into the soul of this stingy man, so it is. gall Heb. שער, from the expression of (Jer. 29:17): “the loathsome (השערים) figs,” the bitter ones.

Verse 8

your morsel that you ate in his house, you will ultimately vomit because of embarrassment.
and you will lose your sweet words The gratitude that you extended and spoke to him tender words—you lost everything.

Verse 9

Verse 10

and...the fields of the orphans The gleanings, the forgotten sheaves, and the corner that is due them.

Verse 11

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

Verse 16

when your lips speak right things since your heart has grown wise.

Verse 17

Let your heart not envy the sinners their success, to be wicked like them.

Verse 18

for because of this, there is a future Heb. כִּי אִם. This [word] אִם is used as an expression of “that”; i.e., for because of this there is a future and hope for you.

Verse 19

Hear you, my son, and grow wise, and walk in the way of your heart Since you will grow wise, you will be able to walk in the ways of your heart, for the heart of a wise man will not entice you to sin.

Verse 20

Verse 21

for the guzzler and the glutton will become impoverished Heb. יוּרַשׁ, will become impoverished.
and slumber will clothe [you] with tatters Laziness and slumber will clothe you with tattered clothing.

Verse 22

Verse 23

Buy truth If you do not find to learn for nothing, learn for pay [pay to learn], but do not say, “Just as I learned for pay, so will I teach it for pay.”

Verse 24

Verse 25

Verse 26

Verse 27

a narrow well (etroitte in French, in German, eng, schmal.)

Verse 28

suddenly Heb. כחתף, suddenly.
and she will increase the faithless among men She increases in Israel those who are faithless to God. He is referring to apostasy.

Verse 29

Who cries, “Woe!” Who, “Alas!” An expression of crying and yelling.
He who has quarrels. He who talks too much To him who has quarrels with the people and talks too much, woe and alas, for transgression does not stop with much speech.
Who has bloodshot eyes? From drinking much wine, the eyes become red, and that is embarrassing.

Verse 30

for mixed wine [as translated,] for mixed wine; this word is a noun, like ממכר, merchandise.
to search for mixed wine Who search and hunt where good wine is sold.

Verse 31

Do not look at wine when it is red Do not put your eye on it.
when he puts his eye on the cup, it goes smoothly Whoever is habitually drunk—all transgressions appear to him to be straight; all ways appear straight.
on the cup Heb. בכוס. The masoretic text reads: בכיס, on the pocket; i.e., the drinker puts his eye on the cup, and the storekeeper puts his eye on this one’s pocket.

Verse 32

and sting Heb. יפרש, an expression of stinging (pointe in French, in German stechend). (Jud. 3: 31): “With an ox-goad” is translated into Aramaic as בפרש תורי, and in the Gemara (Baba Mezia 80a): “The one who holds the colter (פרשא),” aiguillon in Old French, in German stachel, Gewohneisen, and so in Jud. 3:31, II Sam. 8:1, and Jer. 31:18. Others interpret the word to mean that it separates him from life.

Verse 33

Your eyes will see strange women When you will become drunk, they will burn in you and entice you to ogle harlots.

Verse 34

And you shall be mad like one lying in the midst of the sea.
and like one lying at the top of a mast The mast of a ship sways to fall from it.

Verse 35

“They struck me but I did not become ill, etc.” When he sobers himself up from his wine, he does not feel any of the evils that passed over him, and he drinks again.

Chapter 24

Verse 1

Verse 2

Verse 3

Verse 4

Verse 5

A wise man is with strength A wise man is always with strength.

Verse 6

Verse 7

Wisdom is as pearls to the fool Heb. רְאמוֹת, a type of rare precious stone, as it is stated (Job 28: 18): “Pearls (רְאמוֹת) and beryls.” All wisdom appears to the fool as unattainable, [as difficult] to purchase as precious stones and pearls, saying, ‘’How will I learn Torah? When will I attain it?” But the wise man studies a little today and a little tomorrow.

Verse 8

He who plots to do evil He plans strategies of wickedness.
is called a man of wicked designs He brings harm to himself, for people call him a man of wicked designs, a counsel of the wicked.

Verse 9

The counsel of folly Heb. זמת אולת, the counsel of folly is sin for those who perpetrate it.
and what makes man an abomination is scorn Scorn is what makes man an abomination to the Holy One blessed be He, and to people.

Verse 10

If you have become lax in the Torah.
on a day of trouble your strength will be weak indeed The ministering angels will not maintain your strength. This is the midrash of the Sages (Midrash Mishle ad loc., Berachoth 63a). But according to its simple meaning, you have become lax on the day of your friend's trouble, and stand from afar.
your strength will be weak indeed on the day of your punishment, as it is written (Esther 4:14): "For if you remain silent, etc."

Verse 11

rescuing those taken, etc. To rescue those taken to death.
If you refrain from rescuing them, concerning this I said, "Your strength will be weak indeed."

Verse 12

will you say Heb. כי תאמר. And this instance of כי is used as an expression of "perhaps."

Verse 13

Eat honey, my son It is customary for people to eat honey because it is good; so too know wisdom for your soul, and just as you run to eat honey, so should you run to know wisdom.

Verse 14

if you have found it, then you will have a future.

Verse 15

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

Do not compete to be like them, as in (Jer. 12:5): "How will you compete (תתחרה)?" Also, (ibid. 22:15): "for you compete (מתחרה) with the cedar."

Verse 20

Verse 21

My son, fear the Lord and the king Fear the Lord and fear the mortal king, but only if he does not turn you away from the fear of the Lord, for the fear of the Lord is always first.
do not mingle with dualists Heb. שׁוֹנִים, who say that there are two powers [governing the world].

Verse 22

and the ruin of both of them The ruin of the idol and the ruin of its worshippers.

Verse 23

These too are for the wise All the statements in the following section are addressed to the wise who sit in judgment, that they should not show respect to persons in judgment, for it is not good.

Verse 24

Verse 25

Verse 26

Lips should kiss It is fitting that all lips kiss him.

Verse 27

Prepare...outside This refers to Scripture.
and make it fit in the field This is Mishnah.
afterwards you shall build your house This is Talmud (Sotah 44a). Another explanation according to its apparent meaning: In the beginning, buy yourself fields and vineyards, and afterwards make it fit, וְעִתְּדָהּ, an expression concerning goats (עִתּוּדִים). Stock your field with livestock, and afterwards you shall build a house, meaning that you shall take a wife.

Verse 28

that you should be enticed with your lips You should be enticed by your friend with your speech.

Verse 29

Verse 30

a lazy man who does not review the memorization of his studies.

Verse 31

thistles Heb. קמשונים, thistles.

nettles חרלים. They are larger than thistles, and they are as sharp as thorns.
and its stone fence had been torn down Thus, one who does not review his studies first forgets the beginnings of the chapters and at the end confuses the names of the Sages from this one to that one, thereby saying "unclean" for something that is clean and "clean" for something that is unclean, and he destroys the world.

Verse 32

Verse 33

Verse 34

your poverty will come strolling The things that impoverish you will come to you quickly.

Chapter 25

Verse 1

These too are Solomon's proverbs, which...maintained When Hezekiah was appointed king, he returned to expound upon them [Solomon's proverbs]. Now he placed disciples in every city, as it is stated in chapter "Chelek" (Sanh. 94b): "They searched from Dan to Beersheba and could not find an ignoramus."
maintained Heb. העתיקו they strengthened.

Verse 2

The honor of God is to conceal a matter For instance, the account of the Merkavah and the account of the Creation.
whereas the honor of kings is to search out a matter When you expound on the honor of the Sages and on the safeguards that they enacted to the Torah, and on the decrees that they decreed upon them, you should search, seek, and ask the reason for the matter. When you expound on the account of the Merkavah or on the account of the Creation, or on the statutes written in the Torah—like the statutes and things that Satan denounces and refutes, such as eating pork, mingled species in a vineyard, and shaatnes—you should not search, but only conceal [the reason] and say, "It is the King's decree."

Verse 3

are unsearchable The height of the heaven and the depth of the earth and the heart of kings are unsearchable, for many judgments come before them, as well as many wars, and they must apply their heart to all of them. And if all tongues would speak, and all hands would write, they would not be able to inscribe the intricacy of political government.

Verse 4

Remove dross from silver Heb. הגו, draw away, as in (II Sam. 20:13): "When he was removed (הגה) from the highway." Just as the silver vessel does not emerge for the work of the refiner until the copper dross is removed from it, similarly, the community cannot be freed from punishment until they remove the wicked from their midst and execute judgment upon them.

Verse 5

Verse 6

Do not glorify yourself before a king to show your honor and to be proud before one who is greater than you, because it is better that they say to you, "Come up here," than that you should go without his permission, and they should tell you, "Go down, get out."

Verse 7

as your eyes have seen that this thing is true.

Verse 8

lest [you will not know] what you will do at its end Lest you come to a situation that you will not know what to do at its end.

Verse 9

Have your quarrel with your friend But if, perforce, you must quarrel and debate with your friend, in any event, do not divulge another's secret Do not mention to him the disgrace of his ancestors, which not everyone knows, and you are revealing it.

Verse 10

lest one who hears embarrass you Heb. יחסדך (Josh. 5:9) "The reproach of the Egyptians" is rendered: חסודא דמצראי. Lest one who hears embarrass you, and they will call you a slanderer.

Verse 11

golden apples Like knobs depicted on silverplated vessels. silverplated vessels Heb. משכיות כסף, vessels plated with silver, as in (Ex. 33:22): "and I will cover (ושכתי) you with My hand."
a word spoken with proper basis Heb. אפניו, on its basis. An example of it is (Ps. 88:16): "I bear your terrors, it is settled (אפונה) [in my heart]," based and settled within me. This is not from the root of (Isa. 28: 27f): אפן and גלגל, wheel, for, were it so, it would be vowelized with a "pattach" under the "fe" as in (Ezek. 1:16) "האופנים the wheels." The vowelization of the short kamatz is inappropriate for it.

Verse 12

Like a golden earring and jewelry of finest gold A collection of golden jewelry, as in (Hos. 2: 15): "and adorned herself with her earrings and her jewelry (וחליתה)," and like (Song 7:3): "jewels (חלאים)."
finest gold Heb. כתם an expression of a golden ornament, and likewise (Song 5:11): "His head is as a jewel (כתם) of the finest gold."

Verse 13

Like the cold of snow Like the cold of the days of snow (winter), for which a person longs at harvest, but not actual snow, because snow is not beneficial during harvest.

Verse 14

Clouds and wind, etc. When there is a false hope—when the heavens thicken with clouds and the wind blows—people hope that it will rain. Now if it does not rain, they are troubled and their eyes languish. So is a man who boasts, saying, "So much and so much charity I will give to the collector," but he lies, and the eyes of the poor languish for his gift, but it does not come.

Verse 15

The Ruler is won over with slowness to anger As long as the Holy One, blessed be He, holds back His anger and does not requite, the sinners will apply their hearts to win Him over with repentance and prayer.
and a gentle tongue with prayer and supplications.
will break a bone Heb. גרם a bone, the severity of the decree.

Verse 16

If you have found honey, etc....

Verse 17

Visit your neighbor sparingly Just as, if you find honey, and it is sweet to your palate, you must not eat [too much] of it lest you become sated with it and vomit it, so should you visit your neighbor sparingly, although he is from your midst [of your kin], refrain from going there daily lest he become sated with you and hate you. [Bracketed words appear in Salonica edition only.] According to its homiletic interpretation, do not accustom yourself to sin inadvertently and to constantly bring sin-offerings and guilt-offerings to the house of the Lord, Who is called a friend to Israel, as it is written (Song 5:16): "This is my beloved and this is my friend."

Verse 18

like a club, a sword Names of weapons.

Verse 19

a broken tooth Heb. רעה, broken.
unsteady Heb. מועדת, as in (Ps. 18:37): "and my ankles have not slipped (מעדו)."
trust in a traitor He disappoints him on the day of his trouble like a broken tooth and an unsteady [foot].

Verse 20

A worn-out garment on a cold day Heb. מעדה בגד, synonymous with (Isa. 64:5): "בגד עדים, a discarded garment," a worn-out garment that is fit to be taken off since it is worn out, as we translate into Aramaic "ויסר" (Ex. 7:24) as וישדי, and He shall remove. Now this is its interpretation: A worn-out garment on a cold day is like vinegar on chalk. chalk Heb.

נתר, a kind of soft earth, like our earth that is called creide, which they would hew and make vessels therefrom, and if vinegar falls on it, [the earth] is dissolved and ruined. So... is one who sings songs to a broken heart [lit. on a bad heart. This one] resembles them both. Now what is one who sings songs? This is one who teaches the Torah to a wicked student, who has no intention in his heart to fulfill it.

Verse 21

If your enemy is hungry [to be explained] according to its apparent meaning. Our Rabbis, however, explained it as referring to the evil inclination. If he is hungry and tells you to sate him with sins, draw yourself into the study hall and feed him the bread of Torah, and likewise, give him the water of Torah to drink.

Verse 22

for...coals they are to him, that you are scooping from the fire to heap upon his head.
scooping Heb. חותה. Any scooping of coals from a fire is called חותה, as it is stated (Isa. 30:14): "to scoop (לחתות) fire from a hearth."
will reward you Heb. ישלם לך, will cause him to make peace with you, that he should not overpower you.

Verse 23

As the north wind begets rain It begets and creates the rain.
an angry countenance A backbiting tongue begets [an angry countenance]. Slander causes the countenance of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be angry, and this is the comparison [of the interpretation] of the verse. [The bracketed words do not appear in the Salonica edition, which seems more correct than our edition.] The north wind is accustomed to beget rain and a backbiting tongue is accustomed to [beget] an angry countenance.

Verse 24

It is better to sit on the corner of a roof This is stated concerning the withdrawal of the Shechinah.
than a quarrelsome wife The nation of lsrael, who dealt wickedly and provoked the Holy One, blessed be He.
and a house of companionship A house in which they associated idolatry with the Shechinah.

Verse 25

to a faint soul It [cold water] is accustomed to revive a faint soul.
so is good news That too is equal to it, and so was it with Jacob (Gen. 45:27): "And the spirit of Jacob their father was revived."

Verse 26

a muddied spring Muddied by the feet.
A righteous man slipping before a wicked man When a righteous man slips before a wicked man and is afraid to reprove him for his way to his face, the matter is hateful like a muddied spring and a ruined fountain.

Verse 27

Eating honey To eat honey to excess. The topic symbolizes one who expounds on the account of the Merkavah and the account of the Creation to the public; the ignoramuses will ridicule the words and ask what is above and what is below.
but fathoming their honor is honor But when is fathoming appropriate? In the words of the Sages, whose honor is honor: We may ask why they decreed such and such a decree, and why they enacted a safeguard in each decree.

Chapter 26

Verse 1

Like snow in the summer when they spread the figs in the sun to dry them and to make fig cakes, as is stated (II Sam. 16:2): “the bread and the dried figs for the young men to eat.”

Verse 2

Like a wandering sparrow that wanders and like a swallow that returns to its nest, so...
will a vain curse come home to the one who uttered it with his mouth.
swallow Heb. דרור. This is the bird known as arondele in Old French, [hirondelle in modern French, schwalbe in German,] which is called דרור, because it lives (דר) in a house as in a field.

Verse 3

A whip is for the horse [It] is made for the horse, and also a rod is prepared for the body of fools. Tortures are prepared for the wicked.

Verse 4

Do not answer a fool with words of quarrel and contention lest you become like him.

Verse 5

Answer a fool who comes to win you over to idolatry; let him know his folly.
lest he be wise in his sight The meaning of these two verses is explained in [the verses] themselves: Do not answer in a matter in which you will become like him if you answer him. Answer a fool in a matter in which he will be wise in his sight if you do not answer him.

Verse 6

wears out legs and “drinks violence” He who sends a message by the hand of a fool wears out the legs of many messengers by repetitively sending [them] to rectify what the first one, whom he sent at the beginning, distorted. And he “drinks violence,” for his fellow is wroth with him for sending a fool.

Verse 7

thighs seem raised to a lame man Heb. דליו, as in (Isa. 38:14): “My eyes were lifted (דלו).” Every man’s thighs appear to the lame to be higher than he. This phrase is a parable in the mouth of the fool, who says it in reference to the study of wisdom, “How can we come to study wisdom? It

is hidden and raised up higher than I am. The parable states, ‘Thighs seem raised to a lame man.’”

Verse 8

in a slingshot Heb. במרגמה fronde in French, Schleuder in German, in which the stone tied will not remain, for it is destined to be thrown, so is it with one who gives honor to a fool—it is not permanent. And our Sages (Hullin 133a) explained it homiletically as referring to one who teaches Torah to an unfitting student, that he is tantamount to casting a stone into a merculis.

Verse 9

A thorn came up in a drunkard’s hand Just like a thorn that is stuck to a drunkard’s hand, so is the parable stated below stuck in the mouth of a fool to be for him as a thorn—yea, a painful thorn. Now what is the parable?...

Verse 10

The Master created all The Holy One, blessed be He, created all and sustains all, the fool like the wise man. We do not need any wisdom. and He hires a fool Unlike a mortal, who hires only expert workers, and who hires only those engaged in his work, the Holy One, blessed be He, creates all and hires the fools and hires wayfarers, who are idle from all work. [According to] Midrash Aggadah, ושכר כסיל is from an expression of (Gen. 8:2) “And the fountains of the deep were closed (ויסכרו),” and an expression of (Isa. 19:10) “who make dams (שכר).” The Holy One, blessed be He, closes up the constellation of Orion (כסיל), which serves in the summer from Tishri on, and from then on, He closes off all who traverse the sea from going into it until Passover. And in the words of Rabbi Moses, I saw: רב מחולל כל, A wealthy man has many activities, and if he hires a fool, it is as though he is hiring all wayfarers who witness the deterioration of the work, to instruct how to rectify it and how he should work. This is, however, an empty thing and has no connection here.

Verse 11

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

in the cauldron He buries his hand in a hot cauldron because of the cold.

Verse 16

who give advice wise men.

Verse 17

one who grabs a dog by its ears One who passes by and becomes embroiled in a quarrel that is not his is like one who grabs a dog by his ears, who causes him to bite him for no reason.

Verse 18

Like one who wearies himself Like one who wearies himself shooting sparks of fire, as in (Isa. 50: 11): "and in the flames (ובזיקות) you have kindled"; from the expression זיקוקים דינור (Ber. 58b), flames of fire. Another explanation. זקים, frondeles in Old French, slings, from an expression of slingstones (Zech. 9:15), and so in the Talmud (Baba Mezia 94a) זיקתא פסוק לן, "slingers are assigned to us." He shoots arrows and death.

Verse 19

so is a man who deceives He wins over and entices his friend from ways of life to ways of death, and when his friend realizes that he is misleading him, he says, "I am joking."

Verse 20

without wood That is to say: These two things are analogous; just as without wood the fire goes out, so without a grumbler, who slanders and incites quarrelers, strife quiets down.

Verse 21

As charcoal is for coals and wood is for fire Charcoal on fire is capable of igniting dying embers, and wood is capable of kindling fire, and a quarrelsome man of kindling strife.

Verse 22

as though waging battle Heb. כמתלהמים, an expression of מתלחמים. Our Sages however, explained כמתלהמים, כמתלהם, like death to them. The words of the spies became their death.
the innermost parts of the body lit. they go down into the chambers of the stomach. This is the death of dropsy.

Verse 23

overlaid on earthenware Like silver dross attached to the earthenware in which it is refined, making the utensil shine as though it were silver although it has no use, so are burning lips and wicked heart, which pursue people to entice them with smooth and hypocritical talk.
and a wicked heart They appear to be friends, but they are enemies.
burning Heb. דולקים, as in "you pursued (דלקת) me so hotly" (Gen. 31:36).

Verse 24

An enemy dissembles With his speech, an enemy dissembles, so that it is not recognizable that he is an enemy. יכר, deconnoitre in French, [verkennen in German, and so did Redak write, that it is an expression of denial and making oneself strange, the opposite of recognition (הכרה)].

Verse 25

Verse 26

When the hatred is covered with darkness If one performs his deed in the darkness and conceals with חשאון, which is pitch darkness (שואת חשך) the thing that is hated by the Holy One, blessed be He, [then] ultimately the Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal his evil in public, so that they should recognize that he is wicked.

Verse 27

He who digs a pit For example, Balaam, who persuaded Balak to cause Israel to sin and caused twenty-four thousand of them to fall. He came to Midian to demand his pay and was slain by Israel.
and he who rolls That is to say that whoever places a stumbling block will ultimately stumble on it.
and he who rolls a stone He rolls it from place to place so that people will stumble on it. The Aggadah (Tanhuma Buber, Vayera 28, see footnote 157) interprets it in reference to Abimelech, who slew his seventy brothers on one stone and his end was that he died by a stone, as it is said (Jud. 9:53): “And a certain woman cast a piece of an upper millstone upon Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull.”

Verse 28

hates those crushed under him He who accepts slander hates those crushed under him, for Saul pursued David because of slander and slew Nob.
and a smooth mouth A mouth of flattery.
effects rejection It makes him rejected, for it rejects the one who accepts it from upon the Holy One, blessed be He.

Chapter 27

Verse 1

Do not boast Do not boast now concerning a thing that is destined to be tomorrow.
for you do not know what the day will bear Perhaps the day will bear some evil that will nullify it.

Verse 2

Verse 3

and the burden Heb. ונטל, a burden.
the anger of a fool that a fool angers the Holy One, blessed be He, causes [Him] to bring anger to the world.

Verse 4

but who can stand up before jealousy Who can stand up before the jealousy of He Who is jealous and vengeful?

Verse 5

Verse 6

are burdensome Heb. נעתרות, an expression of largeness, as in (Ezek. 35: 13): “You have multiplied (נעתרות) against Me.”

Verse 7

tramples honeycomb Heb. תבוס, tramples by foot, as in (Ps. 44:6): “we will trample (נבוס) those who rise up against us.”
all bitter is sweet Every sweet thing is bitter to it. This can be interpreted in regard to the study of the Torah. If one shows himself to be sated, that he has no desire for words of the Torah as a desire of his soul, he tramples honeycomb. [That is,] even the reasons that are acceptable to the heart are not important to him, but he who yearns for it, even the things that come to him with bitterness and toil are sweet to him.

Verse 8

wandering from its nest that goes and wanders, so is a man who wanders from his place, i.e., a Torah scholar who wanders away from his studies, from reviewing what he learned.

Verse 9

Oil and incense The scent of balsamum oil and the scent of incense cause the heart to rejoice.
and the sweet words of his friend more than one’s own counsel He whose friend draws him near with words is better than what his [own] soul advises him. Another explanation: and the sweetness of his friend who improves his deeds, that they should be sweet to the Holy One, blessed be He, is better for him than gratifying the desires of his heart.

Verse 10

your friend and your father’s friend The Holy One, blessed be He, Who is called a friend to Israel, and your father’s friend, for He endeared your forefathers.
Do not forsake And, if you do forsake Him, retribution will befall you.
and...your brother’s house Do not rely on the children of Esau and Ishmael that they should befriend you. We find that when Israel was exiled to Babylon, they would say to those who led them in neck irons, “We beg of you, lead us on the way of our brethren, the sons of Esau and Ishmael,” and the sons of Esau went out toward them and welcomed them with various kinds of salty foods and blown up flasks.
than a distant brother It is better that the One Who is near to those who call Him dwell among you than that you should come to your brother who distanced himself by saying (Gen. 27:41): “When the days of mourning for my father are at hand, etc.”

Verse 11

Be wise, my son Heb. חכם, become wise, my son.
and cause my heart to rejoice and let my heart be happy with you.

Verse 12

A cunning man saw harm He sees the retribution coming upon the earth and hides from it by withdrawing from sin, but the fools did not hide and passed on the way of harm.
and were punished They suffered loss.

Verse 13

because he stood surety for a stranger A man who stood surety brings about that the judge should say to the creditor, "Take his garment."

Verse 14

He who blesses his friend Someone blesses his friend daily, and the blessing is converted into a curse, for people say about him that he is generous with his money and wealthy, and everyone comes and borrows from him, and the government provokes him to collect his money. In this manner, it is interpreted in tractate Arachin (16a). Besides this, it appears in the midrash of Rabbi Tanhuma (Balak 15) as regards Balaam, who blessed Israel with a loud voice, as it is stated (Num. 23:7): "And he took up his discourse, etc.," an expression of raising the voice, and he later counseled to cause them to sin.

Verse 15

A constant dripping Rain that drips from the roof into the house and drives out the inhabitants of the house.
on a rainstormy day Heb. סגריר, a rainy day, when all are shut in their houses.
and a quarrelsome woman, are alike They are both the same...

Verse 16

He who guards her guards the wind He who thinks to watch her from her lewdness guards the wind; just as it is impossible to guard the wind, so will she not be guarded.
and he calls "the oil of his right hand" He calls "tzaraath" to come upon him until he drives her out like a "metzora," who is purified with oil on the thumb of his right hand [as in Lev. 14:17].

Verse 17

sharpens the countenance of his friend Heb. יחד, sharpens. Torah scholars sharpen each other in halachah.

Verse 18

shall eat its fruit and so will one who guards his master be honored and eat the fruit of his deeds.

Verse 19

As in water the face that you show it, it shows you.
is the heart of a man to a man his friend. According to how much a man knows that his friend loves him, so he will show him his face.

Verse 20

The grave and Gehinnom will not be sated from receiving the wicked therein, just as the eyes of a wicked man will not be sated from wandering after temptation and gratifying his lust.

Verse 21

The refining pot A vessel made to refine silver. The furnace is made to refine gold. A man is refined and considered according to his praise; according to how people praise him for his good deeds, he is tested by the public, whether good or bad.

Verse 22

grain Heb. הריפות, wheat crushed in a mortar.
in a mortar Heb. במכתש, a mortar, in French mortier; Morser in German.
with a pestle Heb. בעלי, a pestle, pilon in French, Stossel in German.
Since they lift it up (מעלין) and beat with it, it is called עלי.

Verse 23

the condition of your flocks lit. the face of your flocks. Do not think lightly of always paying attention to them to determine what they require.

Verse 24

For riches are not forever For, if you are rich with silver and gold, perhaps it will not last forever. Therefore, do not despise your small things.

Verse 25

When the hay is carried away When the hay is carried away in the days of Nissan, the grass becomes visible, and the grasses are gathered to grow (?), then it will be beneficial to you, for you will have the fleece of the lambs for your clothing.

Verse 26

and... the worth of the field The he-goats will be worth as much as a field because you will eat the flesh and sell the hides.

Verse 27

and enough for your sustenance.
For your food and the food of your household; you will have sufficient goat milk. This is the figure. The allegory is: the condition of your flocks The teacher who is appointed over the congregation is required to carry them in his bosom and to lead them slowly. For riches are not forever and thereby, he eats the fruit, and the principal remains.
When the hay is carried away When his laws are disseminated and the Torah is magnified through him, then these lambs will be his clothing, and the disciples shall be to him for a name and for raiment of glory and beauty.

Chapter 28

Verse 1

The wicked flee without a pursuer The wicked flee when their misfortune comes, and they fall on an insignificant thing without a pursuer.
but the righteous are courageous [through their trust] in the Holy One, blessed be He, as a young lion which trusts its might.

Verse 2

Because of the sin of a land, its princes are many This is the punishment of a land, viz. that it has many princes, and they do not respond to any man.
but because of an understanding... man But because of an understanding man, the retribution will be delayed from coming.

Verse 3

A poor man An ignorant judge.
who oppresses the poor in judgment because he does not take his time in arriving at a verdict. He is like rain that floods a field, and it does not produce fruit.
flooding Heb. סחף and the language of the Mishnah (Keth. 1:6): "his field was ruined (נסתחפה)" and similarly (Jer. 46: 15): "Have your mighty men been swept away (נחסף)?" They were flooded, they slipped and stumbled.

Verse 4

Verse 5

Men of evil do not understand judgment They do not give attention to the ultimate retribution, that they should think about it and repent of their way and be saved.
but those who seek the Lord understand everything Good and evil. משפט is justise in Old French. In this manner, Rabbi Tanhuma explained it as referring to the generation of the Flood.

Verse 6

A poor man...is better Even one who is poor in Torah.
who walks innocently with good deeds.

Verse 7

but he who befriends gluttons Heb. ורעה. He associates with gluttons. This is an expression of friends (רעים).

Verse 8

He who increases his riches with usury and interest...for him who is gracious to the poor The government hears about him, that he is becoming wealthy by illegal means, and they confiscate his money, with which they build bridges and repair highways. This is being gracious to the poor. In this manner, Rabbi Tanhuma expounded on it.

Verse 9

Verse 10

into his own pit Heb. בשחתו, from an expression of שחת, a pit.

Verse 11

A rich man...but a discerning poor man Scripture speaks about a teacher and a pupil, that the pupil searches out [the understanding of the subject matter,] and through him, the teacher gains wisdom.

Verse 12

person will be searched out He will be searched out with all kinds of false accusations.

Verse 13

but he who confesses and abandons He confesses his sins and abandons them, never to return to them.

Verse 14

who is always afraid He is concerned with punishment, and therefore distances himself from sin.

Verse 15

like a roaring lion he is to them.
and a growling bear נהימה, roaring, to a lion, and שקיקה, growling, to a bear, are both expressions of a cry.

Verse 16

who lacks understanding As he lacks understanding, he is a great oppressor because he does not give any thought to his life. [Therefore,] he oppresses excessively, for one who hates unlawful gain will live long. [Consequently, he who oppresses others will die young.]

Verse 17

A man who is guilty of robbing one’s lifeblood (Upon whom the crime of robbing blood lies.) He is one who causes his fellow to sin, and his soul is lost because of him.
will flee to the pit Until his dying day, he will flee for aid, that it should be expiated for him.
but no one will support him from Heaven to give him the possibility to repent, so that he will not be in Paradise while his pupil is in Gehinnom. In this manner, it is expounded upon in Tractate Yoma (87a).

Verse 18

will fall in one In one evil, and there will be no rising up after his downfall.

Verse 19

will be sated with poverty Heb. רישׁ, poverty.

Verse 20

A trustworthy man who gives his tithes faithfully, for there is no witness to the matter, but the Holy One, blessed be He, sees and lavishes blessings upon him.
but he who hastens to become rich He hastens the time to become rich from the belongings of the poor.

Verse 21

a man will sin one who perverts justice.

Verse 22

He who hastens to [acquire] wealth He who hastens to increase wealth and steals his heave- offerings and tithes.
that want will come upon him Want will come to him, for a curse will be sent upon the work of his hands.

Verse 23

He who admonishes man for the sins he has committed and separates him from them.
afterwards will find more favor After a time, he will find more favor in his eyes than one who speaks with flattery. We find in Gen. Rabbah (44:5): "Wherever it says אחרי, it means only long after; אחר, it is soon after. In Tanhuma, in the portion entitled "These are the words": "He who admonishes man after Me"—this refers to Moses, who admonished Israel after the Holy One, blessed be He, who were called "man," as it is stated (Ezek. 34:31): "You are men," and it stated concerning him (Ex. 33: 17): "For you have found favor in My sight." more favor than he who speaks with flattery This refers to Balaam, who said fine things to Israel (Num. 24:5): "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob!" Moses announces (Deut. 11:16): "Beware lest your heart be deceived," and Balaam announces and flatters, "Do what your heart desires; He does not care: (Num. 23:19) 'God is not a man that He should lie,' concerning the nations, but concerning you, 'He says but He does not do.'" And Solomon cries about both of them, (above 27:6): "Wounds of a lover are faithful, whereas kisses of an enemy are burdensome."

Verse 24

He who robs his father The Holy One, blessed be He.
or his mother The people of Israel. He who causes the people to sin by robbing the Holy One, blessed be He, estranges His children from Him and robs them of goodness.
destroyer Jeroboam.

Verse 25

A greedy man to attain all his desire.
stirs up quarrels He incites the Divine standard of justice upon himself

Verse 26

Verse 27

He who gives to a poor man charity.
will suffer no want (to give him much charity.) And so it is with the teacher who does not withhold Torah from his pupil.

Chapter 29

Verse 1

but stiffens his nape not to listen.
will suddenly be broken He will quickly be broken.

Verse 2

Verse 3

but one who keeps company with harlots Heb. ורעה. He joins harlots to himself, as its apparent meaning. Our Sages, however, said: "He who says, 'This tradition is acceptable, I will learn it, but this one is not acceptable, I will not learn it.'" The support [for this view] from the verse is that זונות throughout the Scriptures is not spelled fully [with two "vavim"] except this once only.

Verse 4

establishes the country If he is an honest judge, he establishes the country.
but a haughty man Heb. תרומות, a haughty man, who does not care to take time in judgment. Our Rabbis (Keth. 105b) stated: "If the judge is like a king, who does not have to acquire friends and accept bribes, he establishes the country. But if he is like a priest, who asks for terumoth in the threshing floors, he tears it down."

Verse 5

flatters Heb. מחליק, talks smoothly.

Verse 6

When a wicked man sins a snare will come.
and a righteous man who did not go in his ways, sings and rejoices.

Verse 7

the judgment of the poor The torments of the poor and what they require, and puts his mind to them.

Verse 8

inflame Heb. יפיחו, lit. they blow. They inflame it like a flame of fire that is fanned by the wind.

Verse 9

a wise man contends Heb. נשפט, debates with the fool.
he will have no contentment Whether he shows him an angry countenance or he shows him a laughing countenance, there is no contentment either in this or in that. He finds no satisfaction. We find in the case of Amaziah that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him a laughing countenance and delivered Edom into his hands, and when he returned from defeating them,

(11 Chron 25:14) “he brought their (sic) gods, etc. and prostrated himself before them.” To Ahaz, the Holy One, blessed be He, showed an angry countenance and delivered him into the hands of the kings of Aram (ibid. 28:23): “And he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, etc. for he said, ‘The gods of Aram are helping them.’”

Verse 10

seek his soul [This is] an expression of love, and it appears that it is so, as David said to Abiathar (I Sam. 22:23): “for he who seeks my soul seeks your soul.” He who will deal kindly with me will deal kindly with you. The exegetes, however, do not agree with me.

Verse 11

will quiet it When the fool has let out all his wind, the wise man comes and humbles it with the reply of his mouth. Similar to this is (Ps. 65:8): “Who stills (משׁבּיח) the noise of the seas”; (ibid. 89: 10): “when its waves rise up, You still (תשׁבּחם) them.”

Verse 12

Verse 13

and a man of deep thoughts A man of thoughts, a Torah scholar. And our Sages explained it concerning a disciple who said to a teacher, “Teach me.”

Verse 14

Verse 15

but a child left free Whom his father set free to follow the dictates of his heart, ultimately... brings shame to his mother This is Ishmael; since he was wicked, he brought about that Sarah should say to Abraham (Gen. 21:10): “Expel this bondwoman and her son.”

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Without vision the people become unrestrained When Israel causes prophecy to withdraw from them by mocking the prophets, they will become unrestrained and will degenerate.

Verse 19

because he will understand, but without response As soon as he sees him (sic) that the one who was reproving him is silent, he reverts to his sins; therefore, one must chastise him with blows and punishments. He

does not speak of an actual slave, but about all who disobey the words of the judges.

Verse 20

hasty with his words Who hurries and rushes to reply.
there is more hope for a fool than for him A fool has more hope than he.

Verse 21

If one pampers his slave from childhood [This refers to] the evil inclination.
a ruler Heb. מנון, a ruler, and so is (Ps.72:17): "May His name be magnified (ינון) as long as the sun exists." Similarly, every instance of נ׳ן in the Bible, since the son rises in his father's stead to rule over his property.

Verse 22

stirs up strife According to its apparent meaning, מדון is the Divine standard of justice.

Verse 23

will grasp honor Heb. יתמך, will come near the honor and constantly grasp it.

Verse 24

he hears an oath that they adjure him, "Did you see so and so who stole so much and so much from me?" And since he shares with him, he does not testify.

Verse 25

A snare brings terror to a person It is transposed. A snare of sin brings terror to a person. Another explanation: According to its apparent meaning, if a person is stingy and fears that if he gives charity he will require help from people, this fear will be a snare for him. I prefer the former [interpretation], however.

Verse 26

the countenance of a ruler to litigate before him.
but the judgment of a person Any [judgment], whether he will be adjudged innocent or guilty. Scripture [here] speaks of the gentile kings.

Verse 27

whose way is straight A man who is straight in his ways.

Chapter 30

Verse 1

The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh אגור בן יקה, the words of Solomon, who gathered (אגר) understanding (בינה) and vomited it (והקיאה). The Sages interpreted it in this manner.

the prophecy He said this prophecy on that matter.
the words of the man concerning, "God is with me; said the man that is Solomon this prophecy concerning himself because of איתיאל because he relied on his wisdom to increase gold, horses and wives, which he was forbidden to increase, and so he said, "God is with me, and I will be able. I will increase wives, and they will not turn my heart away; I will increase gold, and I will not turn away; I will increase horses, and I will not take the people back to Egypt."
yea, God is with me, and I will be able" Since he said, "God is with me, and I will be able to do it, and I will not stumble." לאיתיאל, because of "God is with me," as in (Ex. 14:3): "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel (לבני)," meaning of the children of Israel.

Verse 2

For I am more boorish Because I relied on my wisdom in a matter that the Holy One, blessed be He, is concerned lest one come to sin.

Verse 3

Neither have I learned wisdom nor do I know the knowledge of the holy ones, for I subtracted or added to the words of Moses.

Verse 4

Who ascended to heaven like Moses?
Who gathered wind The soot of the furnace.
Who wrapped the waters (Ex. 15:8): "The depths were congealed"; (ad loc.): "The floods stood upright like a heap," through Moses's prayer.
Who established the Tabernacle, through whose establishment all the ends of the earth were firmly established. In this way, it is expounded in the Pesikta.
What is his name and what is the name of his son If you say that there already was one like him, tell me what his son's name is; i.e., what family is descended from him, and we will know who he is.
if you know if you know who he is. Now how did you not fear to transgress His words?

Verse 5

Every word of God is refined Heb. צרופה, refined, and He did not write anything unnecessary. [Therefore,] I should have been careful.

Verse 6

lest He prove to you, and you be found a liar He will prove to your face that through your addition you have come to sin, and certainly if you subtract.

Verse 7

I ask two [things] of You Now he addresses the Holy One, blessed be He.

Verse 8

poverty Heb. ראש, poverty.
provide me Heb. הטריפני, an expression of food, and similarly (Ps. 111: 5): "He has given food (טרף) to those who fear Him."

Verse 9

lest I become sated from wealth.
and deny the existence of the Holy One, blessed be He, out of my extreme haughtiness. Now what is the denial? And I say, “Who is the Lord?” Meaning, there is no God.
and take hold of the name of my God to become accustomed to swearing by it falsely.

Verse 10

Do not inform Do not deliver your case against a person to complain about him to the Holy One, blessed be He, even if he is wicked, who curses his father and possesses all the abominations mentioned here, and the proof of the matter is from Hosea son of Beeri, as is stated in Pesachim (87b) in the chapter entitled “The Woman,” that he informed on lsrael and said, “Exchange them for another nation.” Replied the Holy One, blessed be He, “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry” (Hos. 1:2).

Verse 11

Verse 12

Verse 13

A generation—how lofty etc. This refers to haughtiness.

Verse 14

A generation whose teeth are [like] swords [These are] the outer [teeth].
and its molars Its inner teeth.

Verse 15

The leech has Menachem (Machbereth p. 134) interprets עלוקה according to its apparent meaning. We learn that it is Arabic, but the commentators say that it is an expression of the grave and the descent. Indeed, we learn this in Midrash Psalms (31:9), which interprets the “two daughters” as Paradise and Gehinnom. This one says, “Give me righteous people!” and this one says, “Give me wicked people!”
four that do not say, “Enough!” Heb. הון, lit. wealth. We have much [wealth].

Verse 16

the confined womb Sexual intercourse.

Verse 17

the mother’s wrinkles Heb. ליקהת, the wrinkles that gather (נקהין) in his mother’s face, from the expression of (Gen. 49:10): “a gathering (יקהת) of peoples.” The “yud” is a radical, like יפעת, splendor; (יעלת חן) (Prov. 5:19), a graceful mountain goat.
pick it out Heb. יקרוה, an expression of (Num. 16: 14): “will you pick (תנקר)” (Ex. 33:22) “In the cleft (בנקרת) of the rock.” Forer in French, to bore through. Let the raven, which is cruel to its young, come and pick it and not eat it and not derive benefit from it, and let the eagle,

which is compassionate with its young, come and eat it and derive benefit from it. The raven is cruel, as it is stated (Ps. 147:9): "to the young ravens which cry," and the eagle is compassionate, as it is stated (Deut. 32: 11): "It bears its young on its wing."

Verse 18

are concealed from me They are covered after they passed from my eyes, and I do not know where they went, because they hasten to hide from the eye.

Verse 19

Verse 20

and [she] wipes Heb. ומחתה she turns over her lower orifice, as it is written (II Kings 21:13): "as one wipes (ימחה) a dish, he wipes (מחה) and turns it upside down."
she eats Scripture speaks euphemistically.

Verse 21

Verse 22

Verse 23

Verse 24

Verse 25

Verse 26

Verse 27

Verse 28

The spider Erinee in Old French. [Araignee in modern French.]
grasps with [her] hands With her hands she grasps and clings to the walls.

Verse 29

outstanding in their step They walk and succeed with their might.

Verse 30

Verse 31

The greyhound Heb. זרזיר מתנים. I do not know what it is, but from the context appears to be an animal with weak loins.
and the king against whom no one dares to rise up Heb. ומלך אלקום I do not know what it is according to its simple meaning, but the Aggadic midrashim interpret these five sections of four as corresponding to the four kingdoms. Since their rule over Israel was strengthened because of the iniquity of having transgressed the five Books of the Pentateuch, Scripture mentions them five times.
[16] The grave and the barren womb The grave represents the kingdom of Babylon, for it is stated regarding Nebuchadnezzar (Hab. 2:5): "who widened his desire like the nether- world." And the barren womb, that is Media, in whose time mercy (רחמים) was held back from Israel, as it is said (Esther 3:13): to destroy, kill and cause to perish."
the earth, which is not sated with water This represents Greece, which was not sated with issuing decrees on Israel.
and fire, which does not say, "Enough!" Corresponding to Esau, who acted with burning wrath against Israel, for he said to destroy children and women in one day. And likewise...
[19] The way of the eagle This is Babylon, the great eagle, with the long wings (Ezek. 17:3).
serpent This is Media.
the way of a ship in the heart of the sea This represents Greece, who was swift with its decrees.
the way of a man with a young woman This represents Edom, who said, "I will be a mistress forever." [גבר is interpreted as גברת, a mistress, and לעולם as בעלמה, forever.]
[20] So is the way of an adulterous woman The people of Israel brought this evil upon themselves because they played the adulteress with idolatry, and they deserved that the retribution should befall them.
and she says, "I have no committed no sin." As it says (Jeremiah 2:35), "Behold, I contend with you concerning because you say, I have not sinned." (Until this point are the words of Rashi [as they appear] in Mikraoth Gedoloth.)
[21] the earth quakes This refers to Eretz Israel.
under a slave This refers to Nebuchadnezzar, who was the slave and secretary of Merodach-baladan, as appears in Hullin. [To my knowledge, this does not appear in Hullin, but in Helek, the eleventh chapter of Sanhedrin, 96a.]
and a wretch who is sated with food This refers to Ahasuerus, who made a banquet for one hundred and eighty days
[23] a hated woman who is married Corresponding to Greece.
and a maidservant who inherits her mistress This refers to Esau, who should have served Jacob, but the matter was reversed.
[25] The ants are a people not strong This refers to Babylon, as it is stated (Isa. 23:13): "Behold the land of the Chaldees, this people has never been."
yet they prepare their food in the summer [This refers to] Nebuchadnezzar, who performed one [act of] honor to the Holy One, blessed be He, in the days of Merodach-baladan, when he sent letters to Hezekiah, and wrote therein, "Peace to King Hezekiah; peace to city of Jerusalem; peace to the great God." Nebuchadnezzar was the one who wrote his letters, but he was not there that day, and when he came and they told him what they had done, he responded, "You call Him the great God, yet you address Him last!" He ran after the messenger and brought him back.

For that [act of] pursuit, he merited the kingship. This is how he "prepared his bread in the summer," like the ant.
[26] The hyraxes are a people not strong This refers to Media and Persia.
yet they make their home in the rock For they built the Temple.
[28] The spider grasps with its hands This refers to Esau, as it is stated (Gen. 27:22): "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."
in a king's palaces That he [Esau] entered the Temple of the King and destroyed it.
[30] The lion is the mightiest of the beasts This is Nebuchadnezzar, as it is stated (Jer. 4:7): The lion has come up from his thicket."
the one who girds his loins This refers to Media and Persia, who girded their loins and assassinated Belshazzar and seized the kingdom of Babylon.
[31] and the he-goat This refers to Greece, as it is stated (Dan. 8:21): "And the rough he-goat is the king of Greece."
and the king against whom no one dares to rise up This is Edom, who says, "I am it, and there is none besides me." No one opposes him. אלקום, no one stands with him.

Verse 32

If you have been put to shame, you will be in your ascendency If you were put to shame through your speech, that you derided yourself, you will ultimately ascend in the matter.
and if you thought evil in your heart to quarrel, put your hand onto your mouth and remain silent.

Verse 33

For pressing milk For, just as butter will come out by pressing milk and blood by pressing the nose too much, so will strife come out of pressing the nostrils of anger. pressing Heb. מיץ, pressing, preindre in Old French, as in (Jud. 6:38): "and wrung (ויּמץ) dew, etc." And our Sages explained (Ber. 63b): If you were put to shame because of the words of Torah, by seeking and asking your doubts of your mentor, even if you appear to him as a fool without intelligence, you will ultimately be exalted; ואם דמות, but if you placed a muzzle on your mouth and muzzled it, and you did not ask him anything, your end will be that when they ask you a matter of halachah, you will put your hand to your mouth and you will be dumb, for you will not know to reply anything about it. Just as pressing milk gives out butter, so will pressing anger that your mentor is wroth with you for not understanding readily and you were put to shame because of it, eventually bring out of your mouth after a time many (רבות) halachoth and instructions.

Chapter 31

Verse 1

The words of Lemuel the king The words of King Solomon, that he said for the Holy One, blessed be He, because he sinned against the Holy One, blessed be He. Lemuel for God, like (Job 40:4): "to (למו) my mouth." The words that the king said for the sake of the Holy One, blessed be He.
a prophecy that his mother chastised him When he married the daughter of Pharaoh on the day of the dedication of the Temple, she brought in for him many kinds of musical instruments, and he was awake all night and slept on the next day until four hours [after dawn], as is related in

Pesikta (unknown, but found in Mid. Mishle and in Num. Rabbah 10:8), and the keys of the Temple were under his head. Regarding that time, we learned (Eduyoth 6:1): “Concerning the daily morning burnt- offering, that it was offered up at [the conclusion of] four hours. Then his mother entered and chastised him with all this prophecy.”
a prophecy that his mother chastised him An allegorical prophecy with which his mother chastised him.

Verse 2

What, my son What is this that you have done and told that you are my son, and [you did] not [tell] that you are the son of your father. Everybody knows that your father was completely righteous, and if you are wicked, they will say, “His mother made him that way.”
the son of my womb All your father’s wives, as soon as they conceived, would not return for marital relations, but I pushed and entered in order to have a son well-formed and of strong vitality, because marital relations are beneficial during the last six months.
and what, the son of my vows? All your father’s wives would vow that they would have a son fit for the throne, but I vowed that I would have a son bright in Torah.

Verse 3

Do not give Do not weaken.
your strength to women Heb. חֵילֶךָ, your strength.

Verse 4

It is not for kings, Lemoel This matter is not fit for kings who are for the Holy One, blessed be He. Lemoel is like (Job 40:4): “to (לְמוֹ) my mouth.”
it is not for kings to drink wine It is not proper for them to become intoxicated.
neither is strong drink Heb. אַי שֵׁכָר, like אֵין שֵׁכָר, there is no strong drink.

Verse 5

what was made law What is written in the Torah—and surely the tradition that is committed to memory.

Verse 6

to the one who is perishing To him who will ultimately perish—to the wicked.
to those of bitter soul Who suffer pain because of their poverty and their mourning. To give them pleasure in this world, so that they receive the reward for the precepts they kept, in this world, [leaving them with nothing in the hereafter.]

Verse 7

Verse 8

all whose help has passed Heb. בְּנֵי חֲלוֹף. These are the orphans, whose help has passed and gone away.

Verse 9

Verse 10

Verse 11

and he will lack no gain lit. no plunder, i.e., he will lack no good.

Verse 12

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

food Heb. טרף.
and an allotted share Heb. וחוק. This too is the food that is allotted to them.

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

onto the distaff Heb. כישור that is called vertel, verteil, vertay in Provencal, which prepares (מכשיר) the spindle to spin. the spindle Heb. פלך, fusele in French.

Verse 20

Verse 21

She fears not for her house hold For those who live in her house.
for snow For the cold.
are dressed in crimson Colored clothing.

Verse 22

beautiful bedspreads Heb. מרבדים, beautiful spreads for the bed, as in (above 7:16) “I have bedecked my couch with covers (מרבדים רבדתי).”

Verse 23

Her husband is known in the gates He is recognizable among his peers because of his garments, which are beautiful.

Verse 24

to the trafficker Heb. כנעני, a merchant.

Verse 25

at the last day On the day of her death, she departs with a good name. and she laughs all her life about the day of her death, that it should be honored with a good name.

Verse 26

Verse 27

She supervises In her house, she pays attention to all the needs of her household, how they should act with truth and with modesty.

Verse 28

Verse 29

“Many women, etc.” In this way, her husband and children call her fortunate.

Verse 30

Charm is false No one praises a woman of charm or beauty; everything is futility and false, but a God-fearing woman alone is praised.

Verse 31

her deeds The skill of her deeds testifies for her so that all passersby praise her in the gate of the city. This is the figure, as I explained it, but according to the allegory, the chapter is explained as referring to the Torah and those who study it.
[10] a woman of valor This is the Torah.
who can find Fortunate is he who merits to find it.
than pearls Heb. מפנינים, [also referred to as] מרגליות.
[11] and he lacks no gain He eats the fruit in this world and in the next
[13] She seeks wool and flax Since it [the Torah] is compared to a woman, Scripture speaks according to the figure concerning the requirements for the work of women, and the allegory is as follows: The Torah seeks Scripture, Mishnah and Midrash, and searches for them, as they are the requirements of the students.
[14] She is like the merchant ships The Torah brings those who study it blessing and sustenance.
[15] She rises when it is still night They rise early in the [morning] watch.

she gives food to her household The teacher teaches the pupils the lesson allotted to them.
[16] She contemplates a field Heb. זממה. The Torah muzzles Esau, the "man of the field," with a muzzle and a bridle.
and purchases it lit. and takes him from the world to destroy him; from the fruit of her deeds she plants a vineyard Israel, to keep them alive for the fire of the world to come.
[18] She advised Its speech.
her lamp does not go out at night It is written בליל, with the "hey" missing; on the night of watching (ליל שמורים), when the Egyptians were plagued, it shone for Israel and protected them.
[19] onto the distaff Heb. בכישור, through the skill of its deeds.
support the spindle Heb. פלך, a support, as in (II Sam. 3:29): "one who leans on a staff (מחזיק בפלך)."
[20]She spreads out her hand Whoever makes himself like a poor man on its account—in him it [the Torah] endures.
[21] She fears not for her household for snow with which they judge the wicked from fire to snow.
dressed in crimson The covenant of the blood of circumcision. Another explanation: They are dressed with the commandments expressed in double language. (Deut. 15:10): "You shall surely give (נתון תתן)," (ibid. verse 8): "you shall surely open (פתוח תפתח)," (ibid. verse 14): "you shall surely furnish him liberally (הענק תעניק)." All these save them from the snow of Gehinnom. So it is expounded in Tanhuma.
[24] She makes a cloak It grants a glorious [raiment] to the Sages.
and she gives a belt to the trafficker To the one who is girded with its merchandise, she gives a belt for their loins.
[25] to the last day They need not grieve over the day of judgment because they will be saved from it, and all the days of their life they will rejoice at the day of judgment. An expression of צחוק, laughter, applies to anyone who need not be concerned, as in (Job 41:21): "and he rejoices at the din of a spear."
[27] She supervises the ways of her household The Torah teaches them the good way, to separate from sin.
[28] Her children The pupils.
her husband The Holy One, blessed be He.
[30] Charm is false [The charm] of the kings of the nations.
and...is futile Their greatness and their beauty.
[31] Give her in the future.
of the fruit of her hands Glory and greatness, strength, beauty and ruling power.